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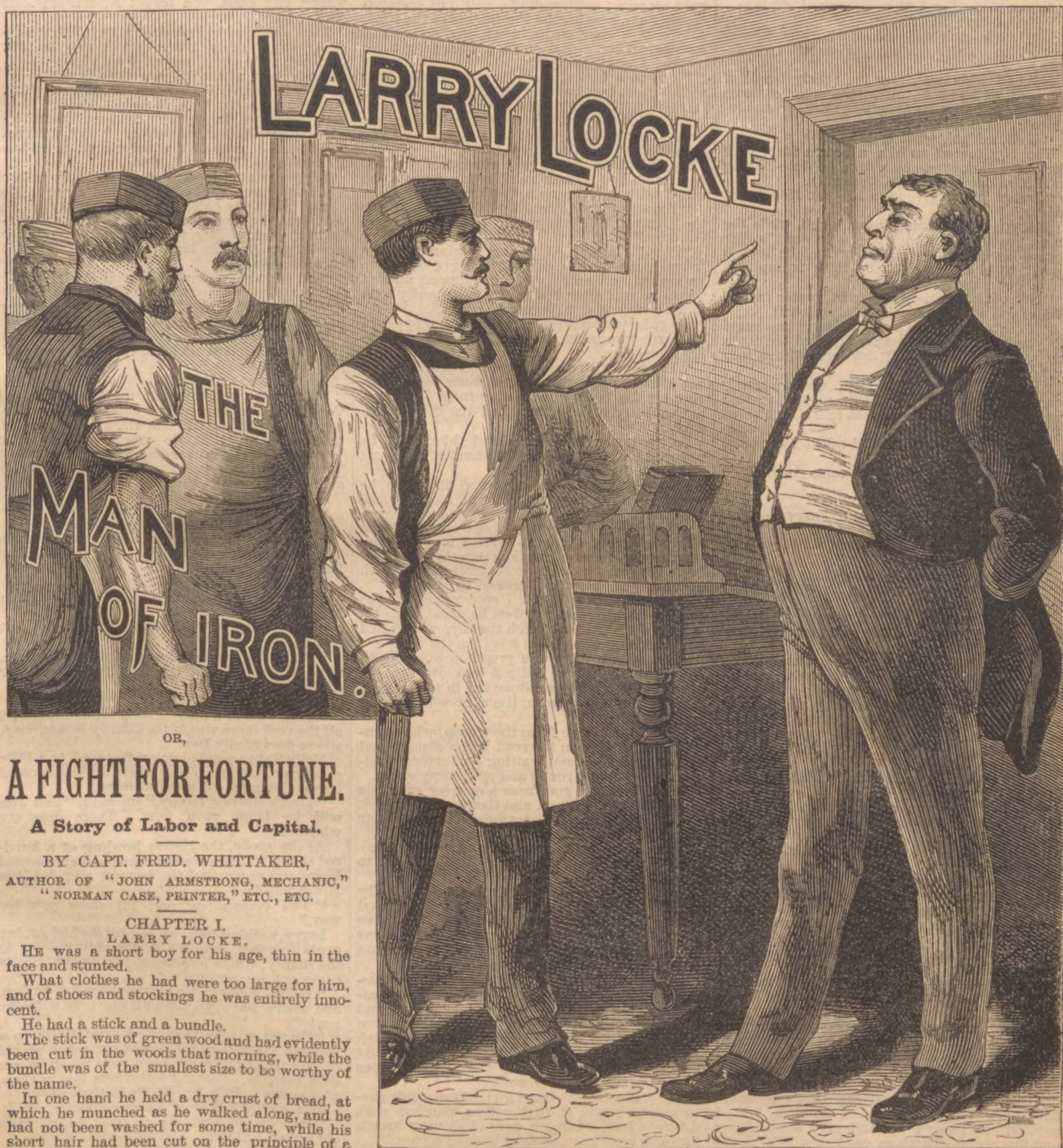
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OR, A FIGHT FOR FORTUNE.

A Story of Labor and Capital.

BY CAPT. FRED. WHITTAKER,
AUTHOR OF "JOHN ARMSTRONG, MECHANIC,"
"NORMAN CASE, PRINTER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. LARRY LOCKE.

HE was a short boy for his age, thin in the face and stunted.

What clothes he had were too large for him, and of shoes and stockings he was entirely innocent.

He had a stick and a bundle.

The stick was of green wood and had evidently been cut in the woods that morning, while the bundle was of the smallest size to be worthy of the name.

In one hand he held a dry crust of bread, at which he munched as he walked along, and he had not been washed for some time, while his short hair had been cut on the principle of a shingle roof.

"AMERICAN WORKINGMEN ARE HARD TO BEAT WHEN IT COMES TO A FIGHT."

The only sign about the boy that he might grow into a man some day lay in his hands and feet, which were big and bony.

He did not seem, however, to be in the least unhappy about his forlorn condition, for the afternoon was warm and the birds were singing in the fields.

He walked along in the soft dusk by the side of the high-road, and when he had finished munching his crust he began to look out for a brook to drink at, for all the world as a savage might do, who depended on nature for his meals.

Not sighting a brook, he began to whistle to pass away the time as he trudged on, seeing before him a low swell of ground, on the other side of which floated a cloud of smoke obscuring the setting sun.

Presently, as he trudged up the hill, he heard the sound of wheels behind him, and looked round to see a curious vehicle approaching.

To a New York City boy the sight would have been no novelty; but the short boy in the road had never seen a tandem dog-cart before, and such was the fashionable turn-out now approaching him.

Two horses, a bay and a roan; silver-plated harness; a pale-yellow dog-cart; a handsome young gentleman, not more than eighteen years of age, wrapped in a duster, driving; a smug groom, with folded arms, white-topped boots, white breeches, silver buttons, and a cockade in his hat; such was the picture seen by the short boy in the road, and one which so amazed him that he stood staring at it, open-mouthed, till it had almost passed him, when he seemed to recollect himself and started forward, crying:

"Hi! mister! hi! Say!"

The handsome young fellow who was driving seemed to be also a very good-natured gentleman.

He had been watching the sturdy figure of the boy, as he came up, with a smile of some interest, and now he actually pulled up and inquired:

"Well, midget, what is it?"

The boy turned to him a brown face, with very keen dark eyes, and a firm, resolute-looking mouth, saying in the coolest manner:

"I want you to give me a lift into Holesburg, mister."

The young man burst into a laugh, while the smug groom at the back of the dog-cart so far forgot his usual severe dignity that he turned round with a scowl on the little tramp and called out angrily:

"Get out of that, ye imperent young rascal! Shall I get off and give 'im a 'iding, sir?"

"No, no, Jim; he's a character," answered his young master good-naturedly, and feeling in his pockets as he spoke. "See here; what's your name?"

"Larry," replied the boy, unconcernedly scanning the vehicle. "I say, mister, when I get rich, I'm goin' to have jest sich a turnout as yourn."

"Larry, eh? Larry what?" asked the young gentleman.

"Larry Locke," in the same unabashed fashion.

"And where did you come from?"

"County poor-house," said Larry, coolly. "I'm a-goin' to Holesburg to go inter the mills, that's what I am, mister. Say, won't ye give us a lift? I've had lots of lifts."

The young man laughed again.

"Are you sure you're clean, Larry? Got any creepers about you?"

Larry colored deeply, for the first time during the interview exhibiting self-consciousness, as he answered sullenly:

"Reckon you'd have 'em, if you was me."

The young man gathered up his reins, and his countenance grew colder as he said:

"Exactly, my young friend. Well, I am of a philanthropic nature, or I shouldn't have talked to you all this time. But we must draw the line somewhere, and I draw it at those animals. Look here—"

He dived into his pocket and pulled out some silver.

"I can't give you a lift, Larry, but here's something to help you on the way to Holesburg. And, mind, don't spend it all on pie, but get a bit of soap and try to keep clean. Good-by."

He tossed Larry a whole handful of small silver, with a careless generosity that showed he had never known what it was to want money, touched his leader with the whip, and bowed off, to the great relief of the English groom, who had been intensely fidgety and anxious during the whole interview, fearing that his whimsical young master might take up this dirty little tramp to ride beside him, James Boggs.

As for Larry, that young person, with great philosophy, picked up the money and began to count it aloud to himself in a way that showed he understood the practical part of arithmetic, which deals with hard cash.

"One—two—three quarters—that's seventy-five—ten's eighty-five—golly! what a lot of nickels! By gum! if he ain't give me a dollar and five cents! That's as good as a lift. Lemme see—what'll I buy? Soap? Well, if ever

any one told me to buy soap afore! Reckon I will get a wash."

He hunted among his rags and produced a bit of red stuff that had once been part of a cotton handkerchief. It was tied in a knot round more money, and he opened it, revealing three "nickels" and five pennies—his whole store up to that time.

He did not stop to count the whole sum, which to him seemed a vast fortune, but tied up his windfall with the rest, and trudged on to the top of the hill, from which he had a full view of the town of Holesburg, with its perpetual cloud of brown smoke hanging over it, below his feet.

Larry Locke smiled with satisfaction as he saw the town; but his expression changed very quickly when he beheld a party of three tramps seated by the roadside, not very far off, waiting for him to come up.

CHAPTER II.

RED MOLL.

THEY were thoroughbred tramps, all three. Larry had tramped it too long not to know that at the first glance.

Moreover, they were watching for him, though a stranger would not have noticed anything peculiar in their demeanor. One lay on his back, another sat up looking one way, the third man glanced another; but Larry well knew they were watching for him.

He had met them on the road from Bucks county, and they knew him, too.

Nevertheless the philosophic boy never quickened his pace; neither did he halt, but tramped steadily on, keeping in the middle of the road, till he was near them, when the recumbent man sat up and called out in a wheedling tone:

"Hi! Larry! Larry!"

"I'm in a hurry, I am," returned the boy, walking on, but keeping the corner of his eye on them. "Got any message to give?"

"Yes," responded the tramp. "What's yer hurry, Larry boy? Can't ye stop and pass the time of day with a pal, hey?"

By this time Larry was abreast of the last man, and had a clear road before him, so he called back as he began to trot away slowly:

"Hain't got no time! Got a 'p'intment with the Guv'nor o' Pennsylvania at noon, I have. Good-by!"

"Stop! ye darned young scalawag!" the tramp roared, ferociously, finding coaxing to be useless, and as he spoke he jumped up and began to run after the boy, who instantly took to his heels and fled like a deer.

Disguise was cast aside, for as he ran he heard the three tramps cursing horribly and encouraging each other.

"Hit him with a stone! cripple him!" roared one of them; and with that a stone went whizzing by the boy's head with a force that must have stunned or killed him had the blow taken effect.

Larry never looked behind him, but he watched the stone as it rolled ahead of him, and on he ran, faster than ever.

Presently he passed it, picked it up as he went, ran a few steps further and stopped, facing round.

The leading tramp was about twenty yards off, roaring out curses to terrify him still further, as he believed, while the other two had been thrown out, and were trotting on with open mouths, already distressed by the pace.

"Gimme that money! I seen ye get it," the leading tramp yelled; and on he came, with his arms outstretched to clutch the boy, who waited till his enemy was within less than ten feet.

Then, with a force and precision amazing in one so small—for he did not look over twelve years old—he cast the stone full in the tramp's face, taking him between the eyes with a crack like that of a whip.

Not a sound came from the tramp, who stumbled and dropped in the road like a slaughtered ox, when the boy, not waiting for further developments, wheeled round and sped away again.

Not till he had gone near a quarter of a mile did he slacken his pace, and then he looked back and saw that the two tramps had raised their friend and were carrying him to the roadside.

Then Larry Locke grinned, and said, aloud:

"Get my money, would ye? Well, I'd like to see ye do it."

Away he went again toward the distant city of Holesburg at a dog-trot, which he seemed able to keep up for an unlimited time, and never halted till cottages began to mark the outskirts of civilization, when he slackened to a walk and ceased to look back over his shoulder.

By this time people and vehicles were passing and repassing, and he felt pretty warm after his run; so he kept a bright lookout round him, and presently spied a girl about his own size, who stood by the roadside, with a switch in her hand, watching a flock of six goats, and eying him as he came on in a way that rather seemed to invite a conversation.

She was a freckle-faced girl, whose single garment was made of pink cotton, patched with divers colors, leaving a pair of shining brown legs and arms bare, seamed with scratches.

On her head she wore a most disreputable sun-

bonnet of blue cotton, and her hair fell over her eyes, so she had to shove it back to look at him.

Larry noticed, however, that the hair was red—very red, indeed—but singularly bright and glittering in the sun, where it came out from under the hood, and he thought to himself:

"That gal's as dirty as I be. Wonder what she'd say if I was to tell her she ought to use soap?"

He made no audible remark, but went on as soberly as ever, till close to the little goat-herd, who accosted him:

"Hello, boy!"

She said "hello!" in an indifferent sort of way, which might mean anything in the world, and Larry responded affably:

"Hello, gal!"

The signal responded to, the ice seemed to be broken, for the goat girl retorted:

"Hello yourself! Say! what's your name?"

"Larry Locke," answered the boy, halting.

"What's yours?"

The red-headed damsel gave her shoulders a shake, and her head a toss, as she answered:

"Well, I declare! Ain't you got no more manners than to ax a lady's name? I ain't goin' to tell you."

Larry grinned.

"I know what it is, anyhow."

She turned up her nose at him.

"No, ye don't. Now! What is it?"

"It's Sall," decided Larry, at a venture.

"It ain't no sich thing," she retorted, putting out her face and looking impudent. "Sall, indeed! Jest as if I'd be called Sall. My name's Taber, and don't you forget it, mister; Miss Taber."

Then she tried to look ineffably tall, but suddenly came down from her dignity to ask curiously:

"Say, boy, where did you come from?"

"Bucks county," responded Larry, frigidly.

"Say, do you live here, Molly?"

"How'd you know my name was Molly?" demanded Miss Taber, surprised. "Say, you're a real nice boy, but don't you go to callin' me no Red Moll, or I'll be mad at you."

Larry eyed her from head to foot. He rather liked her, for she looked strong and sturdy, like himself; but his chief interest in her lay in the fact that he had always found girls tender-hearted and willing to get him surreptitious meals by way of the back door.

So he answered:

"I'd whip any feller callin' you Red Moll."

"Would ye?" asked the girl eagerly.

"Yes, would I," retorted Larry. "You try me some day. Say, Molly, do you live here?"

Miss Taber pointed toward the smoke.

"Out a bit beyond here. I'm a bounder, I am, to Mrs. Skelly."

Larry nodded wisely.

"They was goin' to make me a bounder, too, they was, to a darned old cobbler. Me on a bench, cobblin' shoes! No, sir. I jest skipped in time. Say, Molly, do you know anything 'bout the steel-works here, where they takes 'prentices? I'm a-goin' to be an iron man, I am."

Miss Taber nodded her head.

"Skelly works there. It's in Skinner's."

"And where's Skinner's?" asked Larry.

"Right by the river. You'll know it by the black stripe down the chimbley," said Miss Taber. "But say—"

"What's the matter?"

"Skelly's a furnaceman and he wants a helper—"

"That suits me," interrupted Larry. "What does he have to do?"

"Dump the ore and the coal into the furnace, while the helper fills the barrers," Miss Taber explained.

Larry grinned delightedly.

"That's me to a dot! I used to have to shovel all the coal there was in the County House. Say, where does Skelly live?"

Molly Taber pointed down the road to a little shanty up on some rocks, where a woman could be seen hanging out some washing.

"That's Mother Skelly," she said, "and Jim will be home soon now. There goes the whistles."

As she spoke, the hoarse howling of a hundred steam whistles from the smoke that canopied Holesburg announced the hour of six, and Miss Molly added:

"You come along, and I'll show you the way."

Larry, nothing loth, waited till she had got her goats together, when he followed her down to the shanty, which he reached just as Mrs. Skelly came out, screaming:

"Molly! Molly! Ye lazy, red-headed trollop, and where have ye been all the time with the goats?"

"Up the road a piece," returned Molly, in a manner that showed she was not much afraid of Mrs. Skelly, whose bark was much worse than her bite. "And I found this boy, ma'am, who wants to help Mr. Skelly in the mill."

Mrs. Skelly looked at Larry critically.

"Sure and he ain't big enough, Molly. How old are ye, bubby?"

"Sixteen, ma'am," answered Larry, civilly,

at which Mrs. Skelly threw up her hands in surprise, ejaculating:

"Holy Fathers! Sixteen? And whatstunted ye so, I d'nc?"

"Reckon it was the hard work ma'am," said Larry, simply. "It's good on the muscle, but it makes a feller short."

Mrs. Skelly looked at him rather in a pitying way, as she answered:

"Ah, me poor boy, it's not the likes of you should be coming here. The other b'yes 'll kill ye, so they will."

Larry gave her a quick glance and smile that had a great deal of quiet confidence in it, as he retorted:

"I kin take care of myself, ma'am, I reckon. I come here to be a iron man, and a iron man I'm goin' to be."

"What's that ye say?" asked another voice, as the master of the house himself came trudging in from his work, black and grimy. "You want to be a iron man?"

"Yes," returned Larry, boldly, wheeling round to confront Mr. Skelly, who only laughed good-naturedly as he answered:

"Ah, go home to yer mammy! What'd the likes of you do shovelin' ore?"

"If I can't beat any boy of my age at it, I don't ax to come," declared Larry, proudly.

Skelly laughed.

"Yer age? Sure ye ain't twelve!"

"I'm sixteen," returned Larry, stoutly.

Mr. Skelly looked at him more closely, and came up to feel him on the arms and shoulders, after which he said:

"Maybe ye are, maybe ye ain't; but I know this: The boss won't let us take 'prentices if he can help it, and the other b'yes 'll kill ye. Can ye foight; what's yer name?"

"My name's Larry Locke, and I can fight like a streak," returned Larry, at which Skelly seemed to be pleased, for he said to his wife as he went into the shanty:

"Let him have a bite and a corner on the floor, Bridget. He'll get all he wants as soon as Tom Trainor gets at him."

CHAPTER III.

AT THE MILL.

THE rolling-mill of Skinner & Son was one of the largest in the town of Holesburg, and was distinguished by a peculiarly lofty chimney, with a stripe of black bricks down one side of it, while the legend "BESSEMER STEEL RAILS," ran across the three hundred feet of the mill itself, in letters that took in two stories of windows.

Mr. Elisha Skinner, head of the firm, was a heavy-built old man, with a grim jaw, a shaven upper lip and a long, white beard. He rarely smiled, but still more rarely frowned. He had a cold, collected way of doing things that served him well in business, and a quiet, masterful air that showed he was used to taking care of himself in the world.

Forty years before he had been a poor blacksmith and wheelwright, and it was by dint of hard work, scheming and saving, that he had risen to be the heaviest steel manufacturer in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Skinner stood at the door of the little office, the next morning after Larry came to Holesburg, looking into the big yard and talking to the handsome young man who had thrown the boy his careless bounty by the roadside; while the gorgeous tandem stood near the steps, a great contrast, in its spick-and-span newness and beauty, to the grimy surroundings.

The open, careless face of the young owner was an equally strong contrast to the furrowed countenance of the old ironmaster, but it was evident, from the fond way in which the old man looked at the young one, that they were united by endearing ties.

Paul Van Beaver was the only grandson and heir apparent of Elisha Skinner, and the living link which connected the rich but plebeian manufacturer with the aristocratic Patroons of Beaverwyck. Left an orphan at an early age, he had been spoiled to his heart's content by the two grandfathers with whom nature had provided him to replace his parents.

In his presence alone Elisha Skinner was known to smile, and people said that he fairly adored the boy, having had so much trouble with his own son, who had gone away from home years before, with a cloud on his name, never mentioned since by the old man.

It was with a smile that he said now:

"Well, Paul, and so you got the check?"

"Yes, thank you, sir," returned the young man, brightly. "Ever so much obliged to you, I'm sure, sir. You're too kind to me. I hardly know what to do with so much money. I'm afraid I shall throw it away."

The old ironmaster looked at him in the kindly way he always affected, saying:

"I don't fear that, Paul. You'll never bring disgrace on us all by any act of yours. Only keep away from women. Don't be run away with by any idea that it's a fine thing to be vicious."

Paul colored slightly.

"I hope not, sir. My tastes don't run that way. I like horses and boats and fun, general-

ly, but I don't care about girls; at all events, not the kind you mean. By the by, governor, do you know I met the queerest boy in the road, yesterday!"

"Indeed! Why the queerest?" asked his grandfather.

"Well, I should say the cheekiest, perhaps," answered Paul. "If he didn't actually hail me as I passed him and wanted me to give him a lift into Holesburg, as if I had been a farmer driving to market."

Mr. Skinner smiled slightly.

"I suppose he thought your horses needed work. What did you tell him?"

"Oh, I threw him some change, and told him to buy some soap. Somehow I took an interest in him. He was so dirty and so forlorn, and yet didn't seem to mind it a bit. I say, governor, I've got a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?" asked Skinner.

As he spoke his face grew colder, and Paul did not fail to notice it, for he said:

"Now don't be crusty, governor. The boy told me he was coming into Holesburg to try and get work in an iron mill. I want to ask you this: will you give him a place?"

Mr. Skinner answered more forbiddingly than he had yet spoken:

"My dear Paul, please attend to spending the money and leave me to attend to the making of it. You don't know what you ask. We don't want boys in these mills. We want strong men and good hands. I can't afford to have boys here unless they are very remarkable ones."

"But this is a remarkable one."

"How? in what way?"

"Well, for pluck, for one thing."

"We don't want pluck; we want muscle."

How old is this boy?"

"About twelve I should say."

"That settles it, I can't take him."

Paul looked vexed as he said:

"Well, one would think I asked a wonderful favor. I tell you I've taken a fancy to this boy."

He had his back turned to the gate, and his grandfather, who was looking over his head, interrupted him, pointing:

"Is that the boy?"

Paul turned his head and exclaimed:

"Why, sure enough: that's the identical little shaver. Now, governor, don't be a brute to him."

As he spoke, up trudged Larry Locke, and Paul greeted him with a smile:

"Why, Larry, is that you? And, by Jove, if you haven't washed your face! That's right. Now sneak out. This gentleman is the boss here. What do you want?"

Mr. Skinner looked vexed. If any one else had spoken so, the manufacturer would have answered sharply, but he fairly idolized his grandson.

Moreover, Larry with that straightforward boldness which Paul had remarked in him, spoke out at once to the magnate:

"Say, boss, I want a job to learn to be a puddler."

Mr. Skinner looked at him coldly.

"A puddler? You? Why, that needs a man."

You're only a boy, sonny."

"I'm pretty strong for my age," averred Larry. "You jest try me."

"Yes, try him," urged Paul, good-naturedly; but his interference seemed to vex his grandfather, who retorted:

"My dear Paul, will you mind your own affairs? What's your name, boy?"

"Larry Locke."

"Humph! Well, Larry, there's only one place I can give you—"

"I know," interrupted Larry, unceremoniously. "Jim Skelly wants a helper."

Mr. Skinner stared coldly at him.

"Shut up your head. You're too cheeky by half. If you want to be Skelly's boy, you'll have to fight the biggest 'prentice in the mill. We want strong boys, not midgets like you."

Larry listened unconcernedly and replied:

"That's all right, boss. I'm sixteen, though I ain't very tall—"

"I should say not," interrupted the ironmaster, with some contempt. "You sixteen? You don't look over twelve."

Larry looked up at him quietly, and his voice had a defiant ring in it as he answered:

"If you don't b'lieve I'm sixteen, jest bring on any feller my age, and you'll see. I kin take keer of myself."

Paul Van Beaver burst out laughing.

"There's grit for you, governor! Bring on your 'prentice. I'll bet you ten dollars Larry whips him!"

Again a faint smile crossed Skinner's face. His grandson was the only person that had power to call one forth.

"All right," he said. "Tell your man to go in and pass the word for Tom Trainor. If your boy whips him, he shall have a place."

Paul Van Beaver seemed to be delighted at the idea.

"Anything for fun," he replied. "Here, Jim, run in and tell Mr. Mathews to pass the word for Tom Trainor, out in the yard. Mr. Skinner wants him."

Mr. James Boggs, of Northamptonshire, Eng-

land, groom, was standing at the head of Paul's leader, and he hesitated slightly, saying:

"Can the boy hold Thunderbolt, sir?"

"Certainly. Here, Larry, you go to the leader's head while Jim calls Trainor," said Paul.

Larry nodded and went to Boggs, who said to him sharply:

"Now, then, mind your eye, and don't go to playin' any tricks on the 'oss."

"All right, boss," was the tranquil reply. "Keep yer shirt on. I kin take keer of myself and the boss too."

Mr. Boggs favored him with a scowl and departed in high dudgeon while Larry stood by Thunderbolt's head, which he could just reach, and observed to the magnate of the mill, with infinite coolness:

"Say, boss; is them horses good goers?"

It was Paul who answered:

"Pretty good, Larry. Why do you ask? Would you like to take care of them?"

Larry shook his head.

"No, sir. I'm goin' to be an iron man, I am. When I gets rich, I'll drive my own team. I will. Grooms ain't no 'count. They don't make nothen but day's wages."

Mr. Skinner, for the first time, seemed to be struck by the boy's words; for he said to Paul, not ungraciously:

"Boy's got the right spirit, Paul; right spirit. But then we want muscle."

"Muscle," echoed Larry. "That's me, every time, boss."

At the same moment out came Mr. James Boggs, who reported:

"Trainor's a-comin' sir."

Then he went to Thunderbolt's head and shoved Larry away, saying:

"There, get out. Shouldn't wonder if you'd been jerkin' his mouth while I was away."

Larry curled his lip, retorting:

"Oh, give us a rest! I know what a boss is, as well as the next man."

Paul heard him, and said to his grandfather:

"Isn't he cheeky? It's positively refresh-

ing."

Mr. Skinner made a wry face.

"I guess Tom will take the cheek out of him. He's a terror to the other 'prentices. Here he comes."

Out from the side-door of the mill came a big, burly boy, with a sullen face, bullet-head and large ears. He came up in a slouching way, eyed Larry with a sniff of contempt, wiped his nose on the back of his hand, and said to Skinner:

"Did yer want me, boss?"

"Yes. This boy wants to come in as a 'prentice, and I've told him he can't do it unless he whips you. Can you handle him?"

Tom Trainor turned and looked at Larry with an indescribable mixture of anger and contempt. He stood nearly a head taller than the little tramp.

"Handle him?" he echoed. "I'll just take the head off him, boss. Come, 'skeeter, git out of this yard. We don't want no kids like you. Git, I say!"

Larry, in the mean time, had thrown his stick and bundle aside, and was eying his antagonist with perfect coolness.

"Say, bubby," he retorted, tauntingly, "take off yer boots, and I'll sweeten your coffee for you."

Tom's only answer was to rush at the short boy and level a ferocious kick at him, which Larry evaded by an active spring, while Paul Van Beaver stepped out, crying:

"Fair play there! If you want to kick, take off your boots. He's barefooted."

So saying he caught the big boy by the arm, but Tom turned on him in a moment and growled:

"You leave me alone. I fight my own way. I don't take off no boots, I don't."

"No, no," cried old Skinner, pulling his long beard; "that won't do, Tom. Mr. Van Beaver says take 'em off, and so do I."

For one moment it seemed as if the big 'prentice were going to strike Paul, for he glared at him like a wild beast; but then he seemed to remember himself, for he began to kick off his boots, growling:

"All right, boss, if you say so. I can eat him up anyway."

Then he turned on Larry, and made for the boy like a demon.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOY OF IRON.

TOM TRAINOR was a big, burly boy for his age, and an old rough-and-tumble fighter, who had long been the terror of all the 'prentices in the mill, of whom he was the oldest.

He rushed at Larry with a perfect hurricane of blows, expecting to beat him down by main force, and for a moment it seemed as if he would do it, for he drove the smaller boy back and all around the yard, piling blow on blow, while Larry was ducking and jumping back, unable to return a blow.

"Your boy won't get in, Paul," said Mr. Skinner, dryly. "Tom's doing what he likes with him."

Paul, who was watching them eagerly, retorted, with some heat:

"He ought to. There's twenty pounds between them. But I don't give up yet. Your boy's too fat to last."

"There they go. Your boy's down," said the old mill-owner, still more dryly. "You'll owe me ten dollars, Paul."

Indeed, both boys had gone down, Tom Trainor on top, in a cloud of dust, and they could see that Tom was punching at his prostrate foe with all his might, while Larry's head was moving.

"Not yet," answered Paul, in a low voice, watching them intently. "Look at that!"

By some exertion they could not see in the confusion, Larry had drawn up his knees and managed to throw off his big antagonist, scrambled up on his feet, and was jumping back again, while Tom was following him more slowly, evidently winded by his severe exertions, but savage as ever.

"He's escaped punishment so far," said Paul. "Governor, I'll make the ten fifty that my boy wins!"

"Done!" cried Skinner, who was growing excited himself. "Give it to him, Tom. Are you going to let that kid get away with you?"

The boys were close to them now, and Larry's face was visible. It was very pale, but not a bruise yet disfigured it, and his eyes watched Tom as keenly as ever, while his lips were firmly closed.

Tom Trainor's mouth was open, and his face was crimson, though neither had he received a blow yet.

As he heard his employer's taunt he made a desperate effort, and sent a right-hand blow with all his force at Larry.

"Good boy, Larry!" exclaimed Paul, with genuine enthusiasm, as the boy ducked his head, evaded the blow, and the next moment dashed in to close.

Crack! Crack!

They saw the boys grapple, heard the sound of heads knocking together, and then Larry broke away, while Tom staggered back with the blood streaming from his nose and mouth.

Larry had "bucked" him with all his force, and broken the hold of his enemy.

"Make it a hundred, governor?" cried Paul, delightedly. "Your boy's whipped!"

"Not yet," said Skinner, sharply.

And he was right.

Tom Trainor, through over-confidence in his grapple, had received two severe blows, but he was not by any means beaten.

On the contrary, the blows, coming from so puny an antagonist, had sobered, steadied, and thoroughly enraged him.

He stopped a moment to take breath, and then advanced more slowly on Larry, who kept up the same watchful, retreating game as before, a fierce smile on his boyish face. He had not uttered a sound since the fight began.

Tom was breathing heavily, but kept on slowly advancing, till he got within reach, when he made a tiger spring, ejaculating:

"Now I've got ye!"

He had clutched Larry by the collar with his left hand, and aimed a blow with his right, meant wickedly.

Down went Larry's head, escaping it, but he could not escape Tom's grasp, and the next moment down went both boys in a heap, Tom uppermost.

They lay on the ground, tugging and panting, but Larry had caught the big boy's wrist and had fallen face downward, while Tom was trying to turn him over, and the lesser boy was slowly working his way back out of the grip that held him.

They saw him get up, first one knee and then the other, till, with a sudden wrench, he got his head free, and they saw him turn it on Tom's arm.

Then came a savage cry of pain and fury from the bigger boy, as he relaxed his hold, snarling:

"Bite, will ye?"

The relaxation was momentary, but it was enough for the tough, wiry boy underneath. In a moment he had wriggled back, got one shoulder under Tom's thigh and was lifting him bodily.

Tom struggled savagely, but he was powerless, for his feet were off the ground, and Larry had strength enough to lift him in the air.

Then both boys pitched forward again, and they heard Trainor's head strike the hard ground with a terrible thud.

A moment later, Larry wriggled out and scrambled to his feet, pale and panting, but triumphant, while Tom Trainor lay still.

Larry looked down at him, and then flung himself on his foe like a little demon, clutched him by the throat, and cried as he shook his head:

"Have ye had enough yet?"

Tom had been stunned, but the words woke him, and he tried to clutch Larry, who had both knees on his foe's chest.

Instantly the short boy began to "buck" his head into Tom's face, savagely crying:

"D'ye beg? d'ye beg?"

"Crack, crack, crack, crack!" went the hard little head, and Tom, after a faint struggle, began to roar:

"Enough! Enough! My God! d'ye want to kill me? Enough!"

Larry rose up, panting, and went to old Mr. Skinner, to whom he said, breathlessly:

"I've whipped him, boss. Kin I have the job?"

Old Skinner, for the first time, showed genuine surprise.

There lay his head boy, the strongest in the mill, undeniably whipped, whipped until he begged for mercy, by a little shaver who looked not more than twelve years old.

Paul Van Beaver, on his part, was so delighted that he clapped his hands, crying:

"Fifty dollars, governor! You owe it to me. He hasn't got a scratch. By heavens, he's a boy of iron!"

Skinner still kept staring at the boy as if he could not believe his eyes, and now he took hold of Larry and began to feel his arms and body, muttering:

"That's just what he is, a boy of iron. Only feel how hard he is."

Then he lifted Larry by the arms with some difficulty, muttering still:

"He'll weigh a hundred—and—and—twenty—how much?"

"Hundred and twenty-seven, boss," said Larry himself, calmly. He had recovered his breath with surprising facility, and had resumed his old impudent manner. "Poor-house scales said so. Doctor says I'll never be tall. Kin I have the job you said, boss? I've whipped him."

Skinner looked over at Tom Trainor, who began to rise up and shamle slowly to the mill, and the ironmaster nodded and said, in a gloomy sort of way:

"Yes, you've whipped him. Here, come into the office and I'll send you to the overseer."

Larry, as unconcerned as ever, grinned gratefully and winked at Paul, after which he followed his new employer into the office, and gazed at the huge, dark interior of the mill through the glass door with a keen pleasure that vented itself in the words:

"Golly, mister! This beats the County House all to fits, don't it?"

Skinner, who had taken his seat at a desk, wheeled his chair to say, with a cold stare:

"Shut up your head. You're too cheeky, by half. Take this paper to the overseer and he'll put you on to help Skelly. Did you ever shovel coal?"

Larry grinned from ear to ear.

"Shovel coal? You bet your boots they sot me at that since I were ten year old. Doctor said that's what stunted me. Where'll I find the overseer, mister?"

"Go and find out," said Skinner, roughly; "and look here, boy—"

"Sir!" said Larry, innocently, for he saw there was something on the other's mind.

"Don't get the other boys down on you," said Skinner, slowly, "or they may club together to whip you some time."

Larry nodded his head with the same confident air that he had shown all along, and answered, as he went into the mill:

"I'll take keer of myself, boss, and I'll stay in the mill, too. You see if I don't."

Then he disappeared, and Paul Van Beaver observed to his grandfather:

"He's a trump, isn't he? How he whipped that great lout, Trainor, didn't he? What a sullen, good-for-nothing whelp that is, by the by, isn't he governor?"

Something in his words seemed to anger the old man, for he retorted, sharply:

"You're talking of what you don't fully understand, Paul. I don't see any whelp about him. He fought hard, but that little devil was too much for him. That's all. I don't like to hear you call him a whelp. Tom's a good hand, and it's not *your* place to call him names."

Paul looked surprised at this rebuke of his grandfather, who was usually so kind to him; but he answered:

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir; I was not aware he was a pet of yours."

Mr. Skinner turned red.

"He's no pet of mine, but if you knew all about him, you'd say that you were the last person to abuse him. There, that will do. I'm busy."

And the old man turned to his books, while Paul, in some dudgeon, walked out of the office, and went to his dog-cart to drive off.

He had got into the seat and was just turning his horses out of the yard, when a voice accosted him:

"Are these the Skinner Mills?"

Paul looked round and saw a big man, rather roughly dressed, staring at him with a singularly intent gaze, not at all unlike a scowl.

"Why, yes," he said. "These are the Skinner iron mills. Whom do you want to see, my man?"

The man eyed him and his dog-cart very keenly before he answered:

"I reckon I can find my man. I suppose you're Paul?"

"I'm usually called Mr. Van Beaver," the young man replied, haughtily.

The stranger laughed.

"Yes, some folks might. I'm not that kind.

I've got a right to call you Paul, and I'm going to do it. Good-day."

So saying, he strode past the dog-cart to the office, and Paul, astounded and angry, saw him open the door, saw Mr. Skinner start up and turn round at the noise, and then saw him sink back in his chair, pale as death and trembling all over, as if much agitated.

In a moment the young man had leaped off the box, run to the stranger, and pulled him back, crying:

"Who are you? How dare you?"

To his surprise and indignation the big man turned round and clutched him by the shoulders with the strength of a giant, vociferating:

"Is that your game? Aha! you'll find your *uncle's* got hold of you!"

CHAPTER V

THE BLACK HAWK GANG.

WHEN Mr. James Skelly, furnace-feeder, came home that evening to the shanty on the rocks, Larry Locke came with him, and Mr. Skelly told his wife:

"'Tis a good boy, he is, and how c'u'd he help bein' good, wid the name of Larry? He'll do as much as a man's work, Bridget. Give him a good supper. Where's Molly wid the goats?"

"Here I am," replied the voice of Miss Taber from the frying-pan in the next room. "The goats is milked long ago."

Mr. Skelly took his seat on the stone bench outside the door and began to hum a tune with a lordly air.

"And it's two hands we have now, Bridge," he said to his wife. "Let the b'ye and the girl wait on us. Sit ye down."

Then to Molly he called:

"Set the table and give us our supper. Pwhat's the use of havin' help, av ye don't make them work?"

Miss Taber made no answer but to clatter among the dishes for awhile, but in five minutes more she came into the outer room to announce:

"Supper's ready, gentlemen!"

She did it with a great air and a flourish, but after they were seated at the table she kept making signals to Larry which the boy did not at first understand, till supper was over, when he slipped out and whispered:

"What is it, Moll?"

Miss Taber pretended to be absorbed in her dishwashing, till she heard Skelly and his wife go out to the stone bench, when she whispered back:

"Say, did ye whip Tom Trainor bad?"

Larry shrugged his shoulders.

"I got the place," was all he answered.

Miss Taber nodded.

"I hearn tell of it. Say, I'm real glad ye did it. He called me Red Moll last week and hit me a slap in the mouth."

"Did he?" said Larry, angrily. "I've a mind to give him another for that."

Miss Taber smiled, as she rather liked to hear him say so.

"Yes," she pursued, slowly ringing out her dish-cloth. "Him and me used to be great friends onst, till he found out something about hisself."

"And what was that?" asked Larry.

Molly shook her head mysteriously.

"Never mind. Me and him was in the 'sylum together onst. Say, do you know who was your father, Larry?"

Larry stared and hesitated, rather as if he didn't like the question, but at last said:

"No, nor mother neither. Do you, Moll?"

Molly shook her head.

"Nary bit. Reckon we 'sylum children gets on as well's them's have dads and mams. Well, this Tom, he found out who was his dad, and sence that there's been no bearin' of him."

"And who *is* his dad?" asked Larry, at which Molly only shook her head still more mysteriously, answering:

"Never you mind. I know. Say, did you have a good time at the works to-day?"

"Pretty good," returned Larry, indifferently.

"They had a muss up at the office."

"What about?" asked Molly, curiously, so curiously she dropped her dish-cloth. "Oh my, there's a visitor coming."

"That's me," said Larry, gallantly. "I'm the visitor, Molly. I'd like to see any other feller comin' arter you. I'd lam him."

"But what was the muss?" asked she, affecting not to notice him.

"I don't rightly know, but the men had to run in, to part some one fighting, and they do say—"

"What, Larry?"

For he hesitated.

"They do say it was Mr. Skinner's son, had come back from sea, and that he raised the muss," said Larry.

Molly seemed to be greatly excited at the news, for she ejaculated:

"Mr. Skinner's son? Not Mercellers?"

"Reckon that was the name, Moll."

Molly clasped her hands.

"So he's come back. Oh, the wretch!"

"Why the wretch?" asked Larry, amazed.

Molly drew him close to whisper:

"He's Tom Trainor's father!"

The intelligence did not seem to disturb Larry, who merely answered:

"Is he? And why did he go away?"

"I d'no," said Molly, "but I've heern Mrs. Skelly say what she hearn tell."

"And what was that?"

"That the old man was awful mad, and turned him out, ever so many years ago. So now he's come back, has he? Well, you'll ketch it now, Larry."

"Me? Why?" asked Larry.

"Cause you whipped Tom. Oh, he'll be even with you, if he can. Now he knows he's the old man's grandson by rights—"

"Molly!" called Mrs. Skelly.

"Ma'am?" cried Molly, sweetly, while Larry slipped out of the back door.

"What are ye doin' there, gabbin' and talkin' like an ould country magpie, instead of attendin' to yer work?" asked Mrs. Skelly. "G'wan now! Where's Larry? Where are ye, Larry?"

"Here, ma'am."

And Larry presented himself meekly and suddenly, adding:

"I was looking at the 'taters, ma'am, and picking off bugs."

"Lave the boy 'lone," grumbled Mr. Skelly, who was smoking his pipe in a contented frame of mind. "Larry's a good boy, Bridge."

"And who's sayin' he ain't?" asked Mr. Skelly, sharply. "Sure and can't I talk to me own hired man, av I pl'ase? Larry, boy, g'wan down and take a look at the pig, boy. Av' he's finished the 'taty peelin's, put him in the shty and shut the door on him. Sure the cr'ater don't know ye yet. And he's a darlin', so he is."

Larry went off toward the pig-sty to obey orders, when he heard the sound of whispering on the other side, and saw a head disappear over the edge of a rock on which Skelly's shanty was built.

Something made him hesitate a moment before going on, and it was well he did, for the next moment he heard a voice cry out in guarded tones:

"That's the snoozer. Give it to him, boys!"

And then out sprung five boys, about his own age, whom he knew well as 'prentices in the mill, headed by Trainor, all carrying clubs, and made for him.

In a moment he had turned to flee, and ran like a deer past Skelly's house, to the intense surprise of James, who hastily rose up, crying:

"Holy Fathers, what's the matter?"

"Give it to 'em both!" cried Trainor; and as he spoke he aimed a blow at Skelly's head, which the athletic furnace-feeder parried with his arm, and closed in with an inarticulate cry of rage and pain, grappling Tom and bringing him to the ground, club and all:

"Give it to him," screamed Tom, and with that his four friends began to beat Skelly with their clubs, while the man, in his fury and desperation, choked Trainor, who roared aloud and kicked out, trying to defend himself as he best could.

Mrs. Skelly screamed at the top of her voice and ran into the house to get a broom, with which she laid about her as she knew best, while Molly Taber screamed:

"Larry! Larry! Help!"

Larry heard the shriek as he ran, for he had only gone to the end of the little garden-patch, to pick up a club he remembered to have seen there.

A moment later he came running silently back, wielding the weapon, which was nothing more than the handle of a long spade, from which the blade had gone.

Before the assailants of Skelly could disable the overmatched man, Larry was on them.

One sweeping blow of the tough hickory, a crack like a pistol-shot, and one of the boys staggered back and dropped.

The others turned on him at once, leaving Skelly, and drove Larry back with a shower of blows which he could not wholly parry.

The enemy all carried base-ball clubs, and seemed to be set on his destruction; for they came on all together, and sent their blows in showers, trying to surround him.

He had to leap back and to either side, striking whenever he could, but not able to beat them off, till he felt a stunning sensation in his head and staggered as one of the bats grazed his skull.

In another minute he was beaten to his knees and felt the blows everywhere, on head, shoulders and back, while he was growing confused, with the single idea left in his head that he must fight till he was killed.

He struggled up and threw all his remaining strength into a sweeping blow of his staff, which struck something.

He heard the crack and saw some one fall, then saw a man running toward him—a man with a thick club.

"G'wan, now, ye spalpeens!" roared the man, whose face was covered with blood, and, as he spoke, he struck one of Larry's assailants a blow with his club that elicited a yell of pain.

That blow settled the contest. Both of Larry's foes turned to run, and Larry rushed after them, sending what force he had left into

a last blow that took one in the back and elicited another howl.

"Shtop! Shtop!" shouted Skelly, catching him by the arm. "Don't folly them. Don't I know who they are, bad luck to 'em?"

Larry stopped at the signal, and found that he was nearly a hundred yards from the house. The blood was flowing from his head, and had covered his face and neck, while he began to feel dizzy as he went slowly back.

"Ye did well, Larry, boy," said the older man, as they came to the house. "Begorra, av ye hadn't come back when ye did, it's kilt I'd have been intirely. Here, Bridge, get's some water. Sure, we're worth a hundred dead men yet."

"But, where's Trainor?" murmured Larry, stupidly. "He was with them."

"Don't ye ax no questions," responded Jim, curtly. "Begorra, they got all they wanted to-night, so they did. 'Twas the Black Hawk Gang, they calls themselves. Let them go."

Larry stared round him in the twilight, and saw that all his late enemies were gone, while he heard Molly Taber's voice, as it whispered softly:

"Larry, boy, you did that elegant. Oh, my! ain't I glad you whipped 'em all! I said he'd try to get even with you and he has. That's 'cause his dad came home to-day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

LARRY LOCKE went to the mill next day as if nothing had happened, though his head was decorated with strips of plaster, while Jim Skelly looked as if he had been at a prize fight; but neither of them saw any sign of Tom Trainor in the mill.

Four of the 'prentices were there, with their heads tied up; and many were the jocular comments passed by the men on the affair, which had leaked out, magnified to the usual proportions, before the day was over.

Larry found himself looked on with great curiosity by some of the men who were notorious as fighters, and more than one managed to drop in at Skelly's cottage in the course of the week to hear of the affair in full, while all voted Larry "a good boy," and confirmed the nickname, which he had already earned, of the "Boy of Iron."

But Tom Trainor did not make his appearance at the works during the week, and it was not till pay-day that any one saw him.

Then, to their great astonishment, they found Tom "dressed up to kill," as they put it, in the office at a desk, writing, or at least pretending to write, while a new face was at the pay-table; that of a big, sour-looking man, with a stern expression, who seemed at first not to be familiar with their names, for he was a long time paying off.

Old Mr. Skinner was in the office, and the men noticed that he looked nervous and anxious, watching the big man furtively, as if he feared he might make mistakes.

For a time no one knew who the big man was, till a little dispute occurred as to the payment of one of the hands for extra time, when the new paymaster turned round to say, audibly:

"How is this, father?"

Then there was a murmur among the men. They had heard the rumor that Marcellus Skinner, the outcast son, had come back, but here was confirmation of the report for which they had not looked.

Mr. Skinner came forward; said a few words, and put the matter straight, when the pay-roll proceeded, till Jim Skelly's name was called, together with "Larry Locke, helper."

When they went up to the table the big man eyed them narrowly for several seconds, but said nothing beyond:

"Sign here. You can write, can't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Skelly, rather proudly, and he signed his name with some difficulty.

The man at the table eyed him like a hawk while he signed, and then said to Larry roughly:

"You can't write. Make your mark here. You get three dollars."

Larry looked back at him with interest, as he replied:

"Thankee, mister; I kin write. I l'arned in the County House."

"You look like a —" began the man with a sneer, when he suddenly pulled up, like one putting a great constraint on himself, and added with a smile:

"You look like a smart boy. Sign here!"

Larry obeyed, and as he received his money he saw that the new paymaster was eying him more keenly than he had eyed Skelly before him.

The boy returned the gaze with interest as he tucked the money into his pocket, saying, placidly:

"Thankee kindly, sir. Reckon I will."

"You will what?" asked the other in a low tone, with a furtive scowl.

"Know you next time," responded Larry, as innocently as before, and then he went away from the table with a smothered chuckle preceding him from the men who had heard him, while the man at the table bit his lip, turned

very red, and muttered something to himself between his clinched teeth that sounded very like an oath, though he maintained his quiet demeanor and continued to pay off the men as before.

When the last man had filed out of the gate the new paymaster turned to Mr. Skinner with rather a triumphant smile, observing:

"You see, I told you I could get on and make no mistakes, sir. The cash is all right to a cent. If I've learned nothing else in the world, I've learned to look sharp after the pennies."

Old Mr. Skinner looked approvingly at him and answered slowly:

"I told you, Marcellus, that I was quite willing to give you a trial, and if I find that you have truly reformed I shall make no distinction between you and my other child; but you must pardon me if I test you thoroughly. Emmeline, your sister, never disobeyed me. She married into an excellent family, and her son is my pride and delight. You might have been my partner, years ago, had you conducted yourself as a gentleman, even as an honest man, but you preferred to have your own way and it has brought you to eating husks. But I am willing to forgive all and help you, even to help that unfortunate boy whose stained birth he owes to you, if you will only behave as you have done to-day, all the time. Your advancement depends on yourself alone."

Marcellus Skinner turned away his head from his father to conceal a sneering expression that had become habitual to him, but only said:

"Thank you, sir. I'll try to deserve your trust. I hope you'll think better of me before very long."

"I'm sure I hope so, Marcellus," replied the old man, coldly. "But you must admit that the scene you made with Paul was not calculated to make me love you any more than nature compels."

Marcellus, whose head was turned away still, ground his teeth with an expression of bitter rage at the name of Paul; but it was in tones of great humility he said:

"Ah, sir, don't be too hard on me. I had not seen you for fifteen years and more. I did not know him, and he took hold of me as if I had been a felon. What wonder that I was temporarily irritated? But I'll do my best to make it up, sir."

Old Skinner seemed to be somewhat mollified, for he answered:

"Well, I won't remember it against you, but do you remember this; Paul is my sole heir now. As you behave in future will be your share of what I leave. Good-day. See to the closing of the works. There's Paul now."

Indeed they heard the clatter of wheels outside and saw through the glass door the dog-cart draw up, while Paul's cheery cry rung out through the glass:

"Hilloa, governor, here we are, all ready to take you over to the races."

The old ironmaster's face lighted up with pleasure, as it always did at the presence of his favorite grandson, and he hurried out, crying as he went:

"Here I am, Paul. Don't get out. I can get in alone, I guess."

Marcellus Skinner had risen from his chair, his face ashen gray and working with envy as he saw the happy young man drive up, but he said nothing till the dog cart drove off.

Then he looked all round the office, and at the deserted works, and saw that he was alone with Tom Trainor for the first time that day.

Then he stamped his foot on the floor and burst out into a torrent of virulent curses, the foam flying from his white lips as he raved, on Paul, on his father, on all who had displaced him, while Tom, who was used to rough language, turned round on his high stool and looked on amazed.

"Ay," he concluded. "Going to the races, are ye, curse ye both! You're to have all the cream of life and I'm to drink the sour whey am I! Oh, curse ye both, fifteen fathoms under the bottom of the lowest place of torment, curse ye, curse ye!"

Exhausted by the violence of his rage, he sunk into a chair and continued, in a low voice, as if exhausted:

"Tom, come here!"

Tom, more than half frightened came to him and Marcellus continued slowly:

"Tom, he says I did ye a wrong, and I guess it's true. You might have been Tom Skinner instead of Tom Nobody, if I'd married your mother, Maggie. Never mind; she's dead now. But mark my words, Tom: you're my son, as true as that stuck-up Paul belonged to his dad, that never earned a penny in his life, and now, by heavens, I've come home, resolved to stand anything and everything, so long as I get back my rights at last. D'ye ye hear, Tommy? D'ye hear?"

"Yes, father," answered Tom, doubtfully, for he was cowed by the vehement passion of the other.

"Ay, Tom, and mark'ee this: I'll get 'em. Me and you, Tommy, me and you. I'm the only son, and he give me the grand bounce. His son! d'ye mind that?—his son! And he took Em's baby, a little, puny, squalling brat, to be

his heir. And he's got a dog-cart and lives in clover, while me and you has to slave away our lives in this musty old hole, making money for him to spend, the cursed young snob. Oh, curse 'em, curse 'em, curse 'em, Tom! I hope the cursed dog-cart'll break down an' kill 'em both! I hope— Confound it, boy, why don't you curse the upstart? Curse him well, Tom, curse him!"

Nothing loth, the boy obeyed, and for a good minute father and son blasphemed with a virulence perfectly Satanic, till Marcellus shook his son's hand, saying:

"Thankee, thankee, Tom. It does me good to hear ye swear like that. I'm easier now. But I tell ye, Tom, me and you's got to walk a straight line, we have."

"You bet," responded Tom, with a shiver of disgust. "He's got eyes in the back of his head, I b'lieve, he has."

"Never you mind that, Tommy," said his father, encouragingly. "I've done a deal already, I have, and I was a fool I didn't do it long ago afore he got set on this upstart kid of Em's. I've got him to take me in again and put you in the office instead of the works, and that's a good deal. Now, Tommy, you listen to me, for I'm going to do what I say. Me and you has got to be humble as worms for ever so long, till we get in with the old man. I'll work him, Tom; I'll work him; and he won't know how I do it. Our time will come after he's dead. Keep still, boy. We've both got our grudges, to pay, Tom, and we'll pay 'em, too, when the old man's dead—hey, Tom?"

Tom chuckled at the idea, but he said rather hesitatingly:

"But it will take a long time to work the racket, father."

"Never you mind that, Tom," returned his amiable parent. "I've had my fling, and now I'm going to make money. When I've got back what I ought to have, Tom, and see you a-riding in that cursed dog-cart he rides in now you shall have your fling, never fear. And now let's shut up."

From that day father and son kept their resolution and became models of quiet and submissive deportment.

Tom remained in the office, while Marcellus helped him on every possible occasion, and year by year Marcellus acquired more and more influence over the old man.

Meantime, Larry Locke rose from place to place in the foundry, till he had become head of the "cranemen," who handled the huge crucibles of molten steel, and was known as the strongest man in the works.

Paul Van Beaver went away on a trip to Europe, while Marcellus staid at work in the foundry, and so matters went on for several years till one day Marcellus said to his son, rubbing his hands, with an evil smile that meant a good deal:

"Tommy, our time's coming close now. Tell me the man you hate worst in the world."

"Larry Locke," answered Tom, without a moment's hesitation.

Marcellus slapped him on the shoulder.

"And my man's that upstart Paul. Tommy, boy, we've got 'em both. The old man's going to make a new will."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

SIX years had passed away from the time Larry Locke entered the steel mill, when Mr. Paul Van Beaver, no longer in his handsome dog-cart, but on foot and dressed with a plainness that gave token of altered fortunes, was standing on the top of one of the hills that overlook the city of Holesburg, by the side of a neat little cottage, talking to a short young man with shoulders of unusual breadth.

At the door of the same cottage, and to all appearance an interested listener to the conversation, was a pretty young woman, whose bright auburn hair shone like red gold in the sun, while the baby in her arms had got hold of a straggling curl and was tugging at it with great delight.

"Yes, Larry," Paul was saying, rather sadly, "I'm not as badly off as I might be. To be sure it's a great disappointment when I was assured so often by my grandfather that I was to be his heir, but Mr. Skinner's right to the property under the will as found is incontestable."

Larry Locke looked up at him as if he rather doubted it. He was the same old Larry, in the clear brown eyes and the defiant curve of the mouth, though he had grown every way since he came to the mill. He was still very short for a man—not over five feet four in his stockings—but his frame was unusually broad and compact, and he was one of the heaviest men in the mill, where his strength was proverbial among the "cranemen" who handled the big crucibles of molten steel.

"I don't b'lieve but what the old gent meant to do right," he said, slowly; "but I kin tell you one thing, Mr. Paul, that the men don't like Mr. Marcellus, now he's the owner, and if I ain't mistook ther'll be trouble in more'n one mill afore long."

"Not on my account, I hope," said Paul, earnestly. "Remember, I make no claim to

anything. I've lived a reckless, extravagant life on other people's money, and now I've got to earn my own living. Mr. Skinner has been kind enough to offer me a place in the office at a fair salary, and I'm not too proud to accept it. Mr. Skinner is my relative, and I'm not ashamed to apply to him for help."

Larry Locke cast a glance at the black-striped chimney of the works below before he answered, slowly:

"There's goin' to be trouble, Mr. Paul, and don't you forget it. But it ain't comin' from the men, neither. This here Marcellus Skinner's a bad man. You ax Molly here what she knows about him."

Paul turned to the young woman at the door, saying:

"Well, Mrs. Locke, and what do you know about Mr. Marcellus Skinner?"

It was Larry's first Holesburg friend, the "Red Moll" of former days, now a handsome, bright-looking woman, who answered him:

"I don't know much, sir, but I know he's a bad man, and a deep one."

"And how do you know that? I didn't know you had ever seen him."

Molly seemed a little confused before she answered him, and kept her eyes on the baby as she said:

"You know, sir, I was brought up in the poor-house—"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Paul, hastily. "Never mind that. In this country any one can rise to be anything. I think none the worse of you and Larry for being foundlings. God knows it's not every one who has a father that has cause to be proud of him."

And Paul sighed heavily. His own father had been a lazy, improvident gentleman who had lived on his relatives, on the strength of being the young Patroon, and no one had regretted his loss.

Larry Locke lifted his head rather proudly, and drew nearer to his wife, saying:

"Yes, Moll, we was both 'poor-house brats,' as they call 'em; but I reckon we hain't done so bad, arter all."

Molly cast a fond glance at him. She was very proud of her husband.

"You may say that, Larry, boy," she said. "We don't owe no one a penny, except on the house."

"And we'll pay that when it's due," said Larry, stoutly. "I ain't afraid of no mortgage while I've got my arms. I kin take care of myself, and you, too."

"But about Skinner?" interrupted Paul.

"Yes, sir, about Skinner," said Molly. "It was in the poor-house I first seen him."

"In the poor-house?"

"Yes, sir, he used to come there reg'lar, at one time, to see a boy called Tommy, and the folks said as how Tommy was his son, though he never owned him. And at last he took the boy away. And they do say, sir—"

She hesitated a moment, but continued:

"They do say, sir, as Tom Trainor, that's now in the office, is the same boy, with his mother's name. Anyhow, it was arter that Marcellus and the old gent had a rumpus, and Marcellus went away and never come back till the other day."

Paul seemed to be struck with the story.

"I've often thought," he said, musingly, "that it was curious I never knew my mother had a brother till after Marcellus came home. Grandfather must have been ashamed of it."

"They was all ashamed of it," said Molly Locke. "And no wonder. The old gent was hard but he was just, and he sent Marcellus away, so I've heard say, and he was at sea a long time. He used to spend a good deal of money in the old days; but he's changed now."

Paul laughed rather bitterly.

"Changed? Yes, I should say so. He's close as a man can be, now. Well, it's no use crying over spilled milk, Larry. I'll see you often enough now. Good-by."

"And remember, Mr. Paul," said Larry, as his old patron turned away, "that if ever ye want a friend, though Moll and me ain't what's to call *millyneers*, I won't never forget the fu'st friend I ever had, who got me into the Skinner Mills."

"Never mind that," said Paul, with a slight sigh. "What I did, I did carelessly. It's your good heart that remembers it too well. Good-by."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW SCALE.

IN the office of the Skinner Mills, the day after Paul Van Beaver took his seat as an humble clerk in the place where he had so long expected to be master, a gloomy silence prevailed.

Mr. Marcellus Skinner, the new owner, had been in possession for a week, and was sitting at the master's desk, scowling as usual when ill-humored. For the matter of that, he seemed ill-humored always.

At the next desk was a big, fat young man, with a sullen face, enough like that of Marcellus Skinner to favor the idea that Tom Trainor ought by rights to have been Tom Skinner.

He was making a pretense of writing letters, which, as his education had been of the most limited kind, was a mere pretense and a painful one.

At a high desk, in the poorest lighted part of the office, stood Paul Van Beaver, at work on a lot of bills, which he was entering in a book, quietly and rapidly.

Presently Tom uttered an impatient oath, and grumblingly said:

"I ain't well, Mr. Skinner. I don't seem to be able to write to-day. Can't I have a bit of a holiday for once in a way?"

Marcellus Skinner looked up at him, and the scowl vanished from his face. It was a hard, brutal face enough, weather-beaten and heavy-jowled, with a bristling gray mustache, but it softened as he said:

"Yes, Tommy, boy—certainly. Go to the stable and get the dog-cart. You've got as good a right to it as any one ever had that used to live on other folks's money, with all their airs and graces. Don't drive 'em too hard, boy. I got 'em a bargain, but that's no reason they should be killed."

Paul Van Beaver heard all, but never pretended to notice. It was part of the system of petty taunts by which his uncle had striven to make his place miserable since he entered the office.

The dog-cart had been his, nominally, but on his grandfather's death, and the sudden discovery of a will leaving all his property to "my beloved son, Marcellus Skinner, for the term of his natural life, with a reversion to the legal heirs of my daughter Emmeline," Paul had been reduced to penury at once, the more so as his other grandfather, Marcus Van Beaver, at his death a year before, had left his estate of Beaverwyck mortgaged for its full value to no less a person than Elisha Skinner himself; and the mortgage, which Paul had thought to be an empty formality as long as his grandfather lived, became a grim reality as soon as Marcellus Skinner took possession.

He made no remark, but went on with his books till Tom Trainor had gone, when Marcellus Skinner said, roughly:

"Paul, ye lazy good-for-nothing, what are ye doing there?"

"Copying bills, sir," said Paul, calmly.

"Hem! Copying bills, are ye?" returned his uncle, with a sneer. "Well, come over to Mr. Trainor's desk and write. I want to dictate a letter."

Paul came over obediently and took a fresh sheet of paper, when Marcellus began with his usual scowl.

"I'm going for those friends of yours in the shop, Mr. Paul. I've seen their ways to you and your betters, and I'm going to make them hump. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir. What shall I write?" said Paul, as frigidly as ever.

"Write to Stone & Grynde," was the reply.

"GENTS:—I think the combination you propose is a good one. I am willing to enter it, beginning tomorrow. It's time we taught our hands who is master. If it had been done ten years ago, we should have been richer men. Yours."

Paul handed him over the letter, and the new master signed it, and then said, with a sneer:

"We're going to scale down wages, and I'm going to reduce everywhere. How much do you get now?"

"Ten dollars a week," answered Paul, not without a certain sinking of the heart.

"Well, we're going to cut down twenty-five per cent," retorted Marcellus, "beginning the next pay-day. You'll only get seven-fifty hereafter. If you don't like it, you can quit as soon as you like."

Paul listened silently, and his only reply was the query:

"Any more letters, sir?"

"No. Go back to your bills," said his uncle, sullenly. "I'll bring your cursed pride down yet, with all your Van Beaver airs and graces. Van Beaver, indeed! A lot of paupers, that got hold of my father in his dotage, and would have sucked him dry if he hadn't died in the way he did!"

Paul colored high for the first time. His temper was naturally quick, and he had had a great struggle for some time to keep it in bounds.

"I hope you'll remember, sir," he said, "that my mother was your sister, and that a sneer at my father's family is a reflection on her and your own family."

Marcellus chuckled, and scowled while he chuckled.

"Ho, ho! So the Van Beaver pride's getting up, is it? Well, we'll bring that down. Ain't you a pauper, depending on my bounty? Ain't you?—say!"

"No, sir!" returned Paul, with a great swelling at his throat. "In times past I was dependent on my poor grandfather. Now I'm earning an honest living by hard work."

"Hard work!" growled Marcellus, bitterly. "Yes, curse you! and it will be harder before we've done, young fellow. Oh! I'm going to make you earn what you get, you can depend on that. Here, go the works and tell all the foremen I want them."

Paul left the office, and soon returned, followed by five or six men, of whom Larry Locke was one. They were all stalwart, intelligent-looking people, and filed into the office, seeming surprised and a little uneasy at the summons.

Marcellus Skinner was lighting a cigar when they came in, and took no notice of them till he had secured a good draw. Then he said, abruptly:

"Men, business is bad. Never was worse. We've got a year's stock on hand, and we iron-masters have about concluded to shut up the mills for a few months."

He stopped and puffed at his cigar, partly to gain time to think, partly to watch the men's faces in a furtive way.

They all looked disturbed. One man was as pale as a ghost; others were scowling; only Larry Locke seemed tranquil, and it was he who answered:

"We heard there was a contract with the Plains Railroad that would take two years to fill. Has that fallen through?"

Marcellus wheeled round in his chair to look at Larry.

"You know a heap, don't you?" he said with a sneer. "I suppose you think I'm lying to you. You'd better say so."

Larry looked him in the eye, replying: "If you want me to do it, I'm agreeable, but I don't do such things unless I mean fight, Mr. Skinner."

Skinner looked at him hesitatingly for a moment, and then said:

"I don't fight my men. And look here, Mr. Smarty, I've been a captain at sea and handled just as hard nuts as you think yourself to be. I've sent for you men to make a proposition to you."

"What is it?" asked Larry, who seemed by common consent to act as spokesman for the others.

"There's only one way we can keep the mills open," returned Skinner, looking away as if he did not want to meet the eyes of his men. "Either I shut the works, or you must take twenty-five per cent. less than current wages, beginning the very next pay-day. Now?"

"Twenty-five per cent.?" echoed the pale foreman with a groan. "My God, Mr. Skinner, I've got seven children."

"So much the worse for you," returned the ironmaster brutally. "A man like you ought not to have children. You can take that or go without anything. I've got to cut down expenses or go to the poor-house."

And as he spoke, he arranged carefully a solitaire diamond in his shirt-front.

There was a short, dismayed silence among the men, and then one said pleadingly:

"But you surely don't mean to cut us down for what we have done already, sir? Give us a little time. Pay-day is only to-morrow. Let the old scale begin after that. Give a man a chance to live."

Skinner curled his lip.

"You're a fine business man. I tell you we've made up our minds and you can't budge us. You have your Unions and we have ours. If I pay on the old scale at the pay-table to-morrow, I shut the mill next day. Now what to you say? I want an answer at once."

Larry Locke stepped out again. "Are we to understand that, if you shut the mill day after to-morrow, you'll pay us on the old scale to-morrow?"

Skinner bit his lips. He was yet new to the mills, and did not understand the men, but he saw clearly that Larry was the shrewdest and boldest of the lot. He took refuge in his cigar, before he answered; and it was several seconds ere he said:

"You're to understand no such thing. You're not all fools surely. Half a loaf is better than no bread."

"Yes," interrupted Larry unceremoniously. "That's just what I think. You can close the mill for all me, but I'm going to have my pay in full if I never handle another lot of steel."

Again Skinner looked at the bold young fellow with some uneasiness:

"Suppose I say the works don't pay, and I haven't got the money to pay in full."

"Then I'd tell all the boys to clap a lien on the works so quick it'll make your head swim," retorted Larry, and as he spoke he began to take off his leather apron. "If the pay's all right to-morrow, we'll talk about the reduction afterward. Come, boss, which is it, so we'll know what to do? I don't mind a lock-out, if you don't."

But the other foremen at once began to remonstrate in such a pleading way, that Skinner saw they were yielding, and he cut short the interview at once, saying:

"You hear what I've said. I mean it. I pay the new scale to-morrow. Those men that don't like it can leave the works. And mark you this: they go on the black list. We've agreed on that."

Larry Locke deliberately folded up his apron under his arm, saying:

"Very well, boss, then so do we agree on another list. I stick to the old scale; and, mark my words, we'll make you pay it."

"You will? And who are you? Are there more than one of you?" asked Skinner sneeringly.

Larry shook his finger at him. "You'll find out who we are, boss. You've set a trap for us this time, but we'll show you yet that the American workingmen are hard to beat when it comes to a fight between labor and capital."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PAY-TABLE.

PAY-DAY arrived at the Skinner Mill, and the men came up in the evening after their work to draw their wages.

Marcellus Skinner paced uneasily to and fro in the office behind the open door, and Tom Trainor sat at the pay-table, sullen and forbidding as usual, with the rolls before him and the money arranged in packages, while Paul Van Beaver, at the desk in the rear, was making up and marking the packages, so that Tom had nothing to do with any counting.

The men looked gloomy and downcast, for the news of the reduction had gone all over the mill, and every one of them was more or less in debt, while his means of paying it had been suddenly reduced without warning of more than twenty-four hours, and after the work had been done.

Of course it was unfair; they all knew that. They knew that they could put attachments on the property and compel payment of the old scale if they wished, as to this one amount.

But then they also knew that, if they did so, the mills would be shut down; that their hard-fisted employer might refuse to pay at all, and fight every claim in the courts.

And in the mean time, they had no money to fight, none to pay lawyers; and nine-tenths of them had families at home, the mute eloquence of whose eyes said:

"Half a loaf is better than no bread."

So, one by one, up came the gangs of men to the pay-table to receive their money, and each was formally asked by Tom:

"Do you want to take the old scale and go, or the new one and stay?"

And one by one the men gloomily said:

"What's a man to do? Gimme the pen and I'll sign the roll."

And as each signed and drew back with his money in his hand, Marcellus Skinner's face brightened, and he rubbed his hands, thinking how he had saved three thousand dollars a week, by a single bold stroke.

And the men; what were they thinking of? What does a workingman think of at such a time, when he sees suffering and privation staring him in the face?

They were wondering what they should do for the winter. Some were thinking of going to a beer saloon to drown their sorrow. Hardly one reasoned whether he could not help himself and beat his rich employer. The hard experience of 1877 had taught him that threats and violence do not bring money, and that the law is always on the side of the rich against the poor, even in America.

And Marcellus Skinner kept pacing up and down behind the table, his diamond glinting at every motion, while the poor men outside, whom he was cheating of their honest dues, huddled gloomily together in the gateway, willing to revolt, but waiting to see who would be the first to dare.

At last came the "cranemen," headed by Larry Locke, who strode up to the table, looked at the pay-roll, and exclaimed:

"Hello, Tom Trainor, seems to me you're getting up in the world, ain't you?"

Tom had turned pale as soon as he saw Larry coming. He well remembered the way in which the other had conquered him, six years before, when they were boys, and he had been afraid of Larry ever since.

His fortunes were altered since the return of his reputed father, and Tom was used to hectoring and bullying every one he met; but somehow he could not face Larry. His eyes dropped on the table, and he said:

"Do you want to take the old scale and go, or the new scale and stay?"

Larry laughed aloud and looked round him.

"Why, what a question!" he cried. "The old scale of course. Any man that knocks under to the bosses deserves to be a slave all his life. I can take care of myself."

Some one in the rear of the crowd raised a faint cheer, and Tom turned white as a sheet, while Marcellus Skinner flushed purple, and came up to the pay-table, growling:

"Pay the fellow the old scale, Tom, and put him down on the black list. I'll take care of you, my fine fellow."

Tom, completely demoralized by the sudden dispute, where everything had been going on like clockwork, nervously began to unroll two packages and try to count out the money, while Larry answered Skinner:

"You'll take care of me, will you? Thank ye for nothing. I can take care of myself."

Another cheer in the rear, and Skinner hastily shoved Tom aside, counted out the money and then said sternly:

"Now sign your name and skip, or I'll put a head on you."

Larry looked at him from head to foot with a provoking smile.

"Thank ye. I'll sign my name when I've counted my money. Then I'll walk out of the door. You can bet your boots I don't skip for any man, big or little."

"We'll see about that in a moment," returned Skinner, whitening to the lips. "Count your money, and be quick about it."

Larry nodded and counted his cash aloud with provoking coolness, after which he tucked it into his pocket, and said to Tom:

"Give me the pen, Tommy. I can beat you all to pieces, writing or any other way."

So saying, he signed his name in such a bold, beautiful hand that Marcellus Skinner himself looked surprised.

But as soon as the young foreman laid down the pen, the boss, with the one idea in his head that it was necessary for him to overawe all his hands and check any disposition to mutiny, said to Larry:

"Now, get out of the works! Quick!"

As he spoke, he passed the side of the pay-table and came up to Larry, while a silence fell on the workmen, who were watching to see what was coming.

Larry kept his hands down, and his voice was low and quiet as he answered:

"Keep cool, Mr. Skinner—keep cool. Don't lay hands on me, if you please. I'm going, but I don't allow any man to hurry me."

"Hurry you? I'll hurry you!" cried Marcellus, who, being a large, powerful man, who had been a ship captain, was used to deciding things by physical force, and saw in the short man before him only a comparative dwarf.

So saying, he aimed a tremendous blow at Larry, which the little man evaded by a duck and skip to one side, executed so neatly that it called forth a laugh and jeer from all the workmen.

Then Larry called out in clear tones:

"I call you all to witness he struck at me first. Now then, boss!"

In a moment, as Skinner turned to deal another blow, Locke ducked his head again, closed in, and they saw him strike a single blow at the other's side—a blow that fell with a thud like that of a pile driver, and under which Marcellus Skinner sunk down on the pavement with a hollow groan, his red face turning a dull gray.

There he lay, all doubled up with pain, and Larry, amid the dead silence of all round him, shook his finger at the prostrate man and said, slowly:

"You made a mistake that time, Mr. Skinner. You hit at the wrong man. It ain't the only one you've made, as you'll find out afore we've done. We cranemen all wants the old scale, and we're goin' to have it. Go on, boys, and draw your pay."

So saying he turned away to the table, and one by one all the cranemen responded to Tom's question:

"We want the old scale. Darn your black-list. Give us our money."

And Marcellus Skinner had to be helped into his office-chair, where he sat panting and groaning.

Two of his ribs were broken.

CHAPTER X.

TERROR JIM.

As the sun set that evening Larry Locke ascended the hill to his little cottage overlooking Holesburg and said to his wife:

"Molly, old gal, the fight's begun. I've had to whip the boss."

Molly flushed slightly and looked at his sturdy figure with some pride as she answered:

"Served him right. What did he do?"

"He was fool enough to hit at me," said Larry, laconically. "If he'd been any one else, I might have let him go; but he thinks he's a fighter. So I laid him out."

Then he took his baby from his wife's arms, and no one would have thought, to see the way in which the strong man submitted to the caprices of the child, that he was the terrible fighter who had acquired the name of the "Man of Iron" by the single blow of that afternoon, as he had that of the "Boy of Iron" six years before.

As for Molly, she was too much the old high-spirited, careless "Red Moll" to think twice of such a little thing as a fight in which her husband had won, and it was not until they were at supper and the baby in its cradle, asleep, that she noticed that Larry had become rather silent, and asked:

"Anything the matter, Larry, boy?"

Larry drew a long breath.

"Yes. I've got to look out for something to do, next week, Molly. The new scale's gone into effect, and the cranemen are the only ones who've stood out against it."

Molly smiled proudly.

"Good for them! But I know who put them up to it. One bold man has to tell 'em what to do, and they follow like sheep and think they're brave."

Larry smiled at his wife's enthusiasm.

"That's true enough, Moll; but I ain't so sure

I did right. Ain't you afraid—when I'm going without work?"

Molly tossed her head.

"Afraid? Don't I know you can take care of baby and me? Of course I don't worry about it. It's a lock-out for you, is it?"

"That's just what it is, Molly; and the bosses have made a black list among themselves. I can't get any work in Holesburg at my trade."

"What of that?" answered Molly, cheerfully. "I ain't afraid. Let's move to Cincinnati. I've got money saved, Larry, boy."

Larry looked surprised.

"Where? I didn't know—"

Molly laughed and said, quite low:

"Hush! I didn't want any one to know it. I saved it for the last payment on the house to surprise you. I've got within ten dollars of it hid away."

"But where?" asked Larry, impatiently.

Before his wife answered she went to the door and took a look up and down the road; then went all round the outside of the house, and not till then did she come in and say quietly:

"You ain't got no prudence, you ain't. Don't you know we're on the main road, with tramps passing all the time? I see two of 'em coming now."

Larry shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, have your own way. You're always scared about nothing."

"I ain't scared about nothing," retorted Mrs. Locke, "but I don't want all the tramps in Pennsylvania to know where I keep my money. It's safe."

Then she lowered her voice, as two figures slouched past the doorway in the dust of the highway, murmuring:

"Here they be's, now."

Mrs. Locke, like her husband, talked the most grammar-defiant English at ordinary times, though both knew better, having been at night school three years.

Larry looked up from his supper, and at once recognized the figure of one of the tramps. It was the same man he had knocked stiff with a stone, six years before—a little older, his dusty hair getting grizzled, but the same man, beyond a doubt.

As the tramp and his companion passed the door, they looked in, and Larry saw them stop and consult together.

He knew that the sun was shining in their eyes and he in the shadow; and realized that they did not see him, so he quietly slipped behind the door of an inner room to see what they would do.

As he anticipated, they had caught sight of the white cloth of the supper table only, and came slouching to the door.

The man he remembered had a deep red scar across his forehead between the eyes, where the stone had marked him. He was a big, raw-boned fellow, and Larry remembered that his name had been "Terror Jim," on account of his reputation as a fighter.

Terror Jim was accompanied by a little weakened man, with a cringing submissive air, who slunk by his side as a dog might beside his master.

They came up to the door where they saw Molly standing, Terror Jim with a bold leer on his face, his friend bowing and scraping all the way.

It was the little man who spoke first.

"Please, missus, won't ye give two poor men a bite o' victuals, for the love o' God?"

His voice was whining and piteous, and Molly immediately answered:

"Why certainly. Sit down on the stone before the door, and I'll give ye some bread and coffee."

Terror Jim, who had been staring rudely at her, broke out:

"Bread and coffee, indeed! Blazes! is that all a handsome piece like you kin give a man like me? Ain't ye got no pie?"

Molly shrunk slightly back, for he was coming so close she thought he meant to lay hands on her, and called out:

"Larry! Larry!"

Instantly the face of the little man changed and he ran back into the road, crying:

"Skip, cully, skip. Main guy's comin'."

Terror Jim, on the other hand, stood his ground, and shifted a great club he carried into his right hand as he looked into the cabin, observing grimly:

"So ye want to bounce Terror Jim, do ye? Bring on your Larry; why don't he come?"

For no Larry made his appearance and Molly, now really alarmed, backed into the house, calling:

"Larry, Larry! Help!"

Terror Jim followed her, and had just laid his hand on her arm, when he heard a step behind him.

highway, while Terror Jim, seeing only a little man, with a smooth, boyish face, ran after him, cursing just as he had done six years before, till he discovered that Larry was actually laughing at him.

Then he stopped short, amazed and more savage than ever, and called to his friend:

"Hit him with a stone, Snoopey! Hit him with a stone!"

But Snoopey, as the sneaking tramp had been nicknamed, was already moving away down the road toward Holesburg, with a limp in his gait, and he only looked back to call out:

"Leave him alone, cully. He's a-coddin' yer. I seen him afore."

"Ay, ay," interposed Larry, with the same careless, laughing manner he had shown since he snatched the stick. "You'd better leave me alone, Terror Jim. I don't want to hurt you. Clear out, and I won't hit you."

"Hurt me?" echoed Terror Jim, scornfully. "Gimme that stick, or I'll baste the life out of you in a shake of a lamb's tail."

Larry's answer was to send the stick flying over the fence into a field on the other side of the road, repeating:

"You had better leave me alone, Terror Jim. I know you, but you don't know me."

"Why, who are ye, then?" asked Jim, with more hesitation than he had hitherto shown, for he had had time to notice the unusual breadth of Larry's shoulders.

"Well, my name's Larry Locke," said Larry, quietly. "Maybe you've heard it before. I'm the same boy marked you six years ago."

Terror Jim's face changed instantly, but it was to an expression of grim resolve, as he said:

"Yes, I have heard your name, and remember it. You're the boy marked me for life, are ye? I've come back here to get even with you. I'm a-goin' to do it, too, and don't you forget it!"

So saying he turned away and slouched off down the road toward Holesburg, while Larry, who had expected a fight, called out after him:

"You're a great terror, aren't you? Why don't you turn and take it out of me? I'm the boy whipped you, and I can whip you again, if you want to try it on."

Terror Jim made no answer till he was a good fifty yards off, when he shouted back:

"I'll be even with you yet. Don't ye rub that out, Mr. Larry Locke. I'll be even yet!"

Larry uttered a contemptuous laugh.

"Do your worst. I can take care of myself."

Then he came back to the door, where he found Molly rather pale, and she said hurriedly:

"Larry, boy, them tramps sticks together, all the time. He's gone to get his gang, I think."

Larry looked down the road angrily.

"Let him get his gang. It's too bad, Molly, that in this country, where every man has a chance to work if he's willing, a lot of lazy cusses should go loafing round like that, stealing and begging! I wonder where he's going now?"

They watched him down the dusty road into Holesburg, and saw him join the brave Snoopey, who came up cringing, and was greeted with a blow that sent him running away howling from Terror Jim.

They saw Terror Jim stop, and from his attitude and gesture he was evidently ordering Snoopey to come back, which the little man did, crouching and trembling, till Jim clutched him.

Then they saw the big man shake the little one violently, and cuff him several times, after which the pair resumed their way to the city, Snoopey limping along like a whipped dog beside his master.

Larry and his wife could not help laughing at the idea of a tramp having a servant, but it was clear that Snoopey was a regular slave to Terror Jim, who kept him orderly by thrashing, in true slavery style.

The two tramps finally disappeared in the dust, and Larry returned to his house, while Molly cleared away the table.

The little episode of the tramps had almost put the strike out of their heads, but they resumed it when Larry was sitting on the stone bench at the cottage door in the twilight, smoking his evening pipe.

Then Molly came to sit beside him, and whispered softly:

"What ails ye, Larry, boy? You're so still."

"I'm thinking," he said, "that to win in this strike something has got to be done, Molly."

"What's to be done?"

"I don't know. The bosses have taken the men by surprise, and we ain't organized."

"Then why not organize? What do you have to do to organize?"

Larry puffed thoughtfully at his pipe.

"I've heard there's a new society that they call the Friends of Labor, but I don't know much about them. I wish we had some of them here to show us what to do. In the mean time I've got to look out for work somewhere else, me and all the cranemen."

"I wish the rest of the hands had struck," said Molly, resentfully. "They hain't got any spirit. I'm glad you whipped old Skinner, anyway, the old hunk."

"Mebbe I'll wish I hadn't," said Larry, in a sober, thoughtful tone. "He hit me first, to be sure, but then he's a rich man and I ain't. He may have me arrested yet."

Molly started and clutched his arm.

"You never told me of that. Do you think you will be?"

Larry looked down the road toward the city in the same thoughtful way.

"I've been watching for a wagon ever since I came here," he said. "It would be just like a rich man's spite to lock me up when I couldn't get bail."

"But they couldn't— What could they do to ye, Larry?"

"They could fine me and send me to prison for it, I reckon," said Larry, soberly. "Mr. Paul, you know, he studied to be a lawyer, and I asked him."

"Would he defend you?" asked Molly.

"I suppose he would; but it's no use to borrow trouble— Ah! what's that?"

The young fellow rose from his seat to peer down the road in the gloom. A dark object was moving along the center of the yellow road and coming toward them.

Larry looked at it for some minutes, and then knocked the ashes out of his pipe, to say to Molly in a low tone:

"It's what I expected. They're coming for me. When I'm gone, lock up the house and don't let no one in. I'll be back to-morrow. It can't be much of a time. I only hit him with my fist, after he hit at me."

Molly's voice trembled as she answered:

"I'll—I'll do the best I can, Larry. Hadn't I better take baby and go with you? It will be so lonesome here."

Larry shook his head.

"They won't let you, I'm afraid. It's only for one night, Molly; and no one ever comes round here."

"Except tramps," said Molly, with a shudder. "Suppose that man comes back to-night?"

Larry started at the idea struck him.

"That's true. See here. Take baby and go over to John Maguire's. He'll let you stay all night, I reckon. His wife's a good woman."

Molly nodded and said with some relief:

"That's the best thing to do. Here they come, Larry. Maybe it's not what you think."

The dark object in the road had come so near that they distinguished the outline of a wagon with two horses and three men in it, as it halted before the door.

Two of the men got out, and came up to Larry, when one said:

"You're Laurence Locke, ain't you?"

"Yes," said Larry, quietly. "What do you want?"

"I've got a warrant for you," was the answer. "You'll come along peaceable, won't you?"

Larry recognized the voice.

"Is that you, Jack Davis? Of course I will. You know that. What's the charge?"

"Felonious assault," returned the constable, in a grave manner. "Mr. Skinner's hurt bad, and I jest got the warrant."

"Then I'll go with you at once," said Larry, "though you might have waited till the morning. I'm not going to run away."

"I dunno 'bout that," returned Davis, dryly.

"The affidavit says you was."

"Whose affidavit?" asked Larry, surprised.

"You'll find out to-morrow," said Davis, evasively. "Now, then, if you're ready, hold out your hands."

"What for?" asked Larry, angrily. "You're not going to iron me, surely?"

"That's jest what we're going to do," answered Davis, laconically, and as he spoke Larry heard the "click, click," of a pistol lock, while the other man got to the other side.

"Now don't give us any trouble. We're officers with a warrant. Hold out your hands."

For one instant Larry hesitated, and then he held out his hands, saying:

"All right, Jack Davis. Put on the irons. It's a shame, and you know it."

Jack Davis made no answer but a sign to the other man, who snapped the irons in a moment on Larry's strong wrists.

Then the constable said in a tone of relief:

"That's all right. It ain't my fault. I've got to obey my orders. Now git into the wagon."

"Can't I go with him?" asked Molly, who had been standing by them, too stunned to interfere before this.

The constable took hold of Larry's arm.

"There ain't no room in the wagon," he said. "You'd better look after your house. You can see him to-morrow. It ain't a hangin' matter, an' he can get bail, I reckon."

"Do what I told you," said Larry to his wife. "Go to John Maguire's, and I'll come home to-morrow if they'll let me. Keep up your heart, Molly. This is nothing."

Then they took him to the wagon and left poor Molly standing alone by her own house, not knowing what to do and too bewildered even to cry.

She watched the wagon go down the road to Holesburg till it vanished in the darkness, and then only she uttered a sob and turned to re-

CHAPTER XI. THE ARREST.

THE tramp heard the step just half a second too late, for it was Larry Locke who was behind him, and he had grasped the club held by Terror Jim and wrenched it from his hands before the man was aware of his proximity.

Then Larry ran back out of the door to the

enter the house, where her baby lay asleep in the cradle.

At that very instant she heard a step near the house at the back, and saw a dark figure coming round the angle of the wall toward her.

In a moment she had whisked into the door and slammed it close, locking it with desperate haste, for she felt nervous and frightened.

She had hardly time to fasten the back door also, when she heard a gentle knock at the one she had first closed and a voice whispered hoarsely:

"Say! Say! Open the door!"

"Go away!" she answered, with a courage that surprised herself, for she was all alone in the dark. "I've got a pistol."

There was a low chuckle outside, and the voice whispered back:

"Open the door, ye durned fool. I ain't goin' to hurt ye. All I want's a night's lodgin'. I'm a friend, I am."

"Go away," she repeated, her heart beating rapidly, while she was raking her brains for something to use as a weapon.

"I won't go away," whispered the man outside, in the same hoarse tone. "I seen your man took off. You open the door, Red Moll, or it'll be the worse for ye."

Molly Locke made no answer, but to steal back to the inner room. She had just remembered that the window there was open.

The man gave the door a violent kick as she went.

CHAPTER XII.

A FIGHT IN A STATION HOUSE.

As Larry Locke drove off down the road to Holesburg between the two constables he kept a keen lookout at every one they met. He could not help feeling apprehensive of the return to execute vengeance of the tramps he had driven off.

He asked Jack Davis whether he had seen any tramps, and Jack answered:

"Lots of 'em. We took in nigh a dozen at the station afore I left."

"Was one a big man, with grizzled hair, they call Terror Jim?" asked Larry. "He was down my way, and I'm afraid he'll annoy my wife, now I'm not there to take care of her."

Davis shrugged his shoulders.

"I d'no'. What makes ye live in sich a place as that, with no neighbors?"

"Because it's cheap," said Larry, shortly.

"Is that a good reason?"

"Reckon so. Well, if tramps comes arter the old woman, you kin bet they'll be punished, jest as you're goin' to be punished for doin' what you hadn't oughter ha' done."

And after that they drove on in silence, till they came to the station or lock-up, at which Davis deposited his prisoner, who was at once put in a cell with a sleeping tramp whose odor sickened even the strong nerves of Larry.

"Can't you let me sit outside, sergcant?" he pleaded. "I don't want to run away, but it's a hot night, and that fellow's perfume's enough to kill a man."

The sergeant's only reply was to push him in and lock the grated door, when the tramp grunted and turned over, showing the face of Terror Jim, who said, with a sneer:

"Oho! so it's you, is it? Well, that couldn't have happened better. What a lovin' couple we'll be, won't we, Larry boy?"

He rolled over to rest on one arm, and surveyed Harry with an evil leer.

"You're a fine pill, ain't ye?" he said. "Ye ain't got no rocks to heave at a man now, have ye? We're all alone, ain't we?"

Larry saw there was a stool in the corner, so he took it and sat down, facing Jim, with his back against the wall, but made no sort of answer to the tramp, who continued:

"Oh, we'll be a lovin' couple, won't we, Larry? And Snoopey, too, he's goin' to have a nice time to-night. That's a rippin' nice gal you married, Larry boy."

Larry made no answer, but his eyes began to blaze, and Jim laughed.

"Oh, yes, I told Snoopey to go back. I had quite a nice time, hearin' 'bout the scrape you was in, hittin' a man with a bar of iron. Reckon Snoopey's about there now."

"Look here," interrupted Larry, in a low tone, "I don't want to hurt you, Jim, but if you go on in that style, you'll get what you don't want in a minute or two."

Jim laughed.

"I will, will I! Well, I hear tell how you're some on the muckle; but I ain't no slouch, nuther. Come, young feller, shut up when a man of my age talks to ye. 'Tain't fittin' fur boys to talk to men."

As he spoke he threw down his feet and sat up on the side of the bed, surveying Larry in the same lowering way.

Larry saw that he meant fight, and drew up his own feet for a spring, when Terror Jim observed:

"I'm goin' to whip you, Larry boy."

"Are you?" retorted Larry, coolly. "I don't believe you. You always was a darned liar."

Terror Jim got his feet down firmly on the floor, and a savage grin came over his face as he said:

"We'll see about that. Now holler for the cops, and I'll know I've got yer."

"I don't need to holler for the cops," returned Larry, scornfully. "We'll see who hollers first, you darned bloat."

Terror Jim glared at him ferociously, but as Larry only laughed, the tramp suddenly made his spring, intending to grapple.

In the same instant Larry stooped and rose again, with all the force of his stout, muscular body.

There was a dull crash in the gloomy cell, and Terror Jim staggered back, clutching at the air, and fell on the bed, with a stream of blood gushing from his nose and mouth.

Larry had caught him with one of his old "bucks," that he had not used since he was a boy, and knocked him stupid in a single round.

The noise of the short scuffle brought the doorman up.

"He looked through the grating."

"What's the matter, there?" he asked, harshly.

"He bucked me! he bucked me!" moaned Terror Jim, dismally. "I wasn't doin' nothin' to him, and he bucked me."

Larry dignified no reply, and the doorman shook his finger menacingly at him.

"You want a little clubbing, you do," he said. "Ain't you ashamed to buck a man like that? If I hear any more noise I'll put you in the dark cell."

He was moving away when Terror Jim began to whine:

"Oh, for God's sake take me outer this. He'll kill me, he'll kill me! I'm only in for a night's lodgin'."

The doorman hesitated.

"We ain't got no more room," he grumbled. "If he hits ye again, call me, and I'll give him something he won't want."

He turned and walked off, when Terror Jim jumped off the bed and seized hold of Larry, yelling:

"Save me! Save me! He's killing me."

The doorman uttered an angry curse and rapped on the stone-floor with his club, while Larry, seeing to what the trick of his opponent was likely to expose him, clutched Jim by the throat, threw him on the floor, and muttered:

"You'll do it, will you? I'll give you what you'll remember, then."

A moment later Jim was black in the face, while the sound of steps outside told that the reserve was running in.

The big tramp was a strong man, but he felt like a child to Larry, who ground his knuckles into Jim's throat, and never let go till he heard the door open behind him.

Then, desperate at the prospect of the clubbing that was coming, he threw himself over on his back, rolling the tramp uppermost, and shouted:

"I surrender! Don't club any more!"

His shout would not have been much use to save him; for, a policeman's blood once up, club law prevails; but just at this moment a clear, sharp voice cried from the rear of the crowd:

"What's all this? Silence, here!"

It was the voice of the captain, who was known everywhere as "Lightning Brown," and the men fell back, while the doorman reported:

"Two prisoners fighting, sir. We were going to separate them."

A deep hush had fallen on the station, and Larry threw off his now senseless burden and called out:

"Captain Brown, you know me. I'm as peaceable a man as goes. I'm Larry Locke. This man attacked me and got the worst of it; that's all. Don't let me be clubbed."

Captain Brown came to the cell door.

"Come out here," he said, sharply. "No one shall club you, if you don't deserve it. Let me take a look at you."

Larry instantly stepped out and stood up before the captain, who exclaimed:

"Why, he's ironed! What's the charge against him, sergeant?"

The sergeant hesitated, and had to go to the blotter before he could tell.

Finally he read out:

"Felonious assault, sir. Complainant, Mr. Skinner, of the steel mills."

"Then why was he put in where he could hurt any one else?" said the captain, sternly. "Here, pull this other man out. Who's he?"

"A tramp for a lodging, sir," answered the sergeant, sullenly. "We're that crowded we couldn't help ourselves, sir, and we thought the big bloke could take care of himself."

A grim smile crossed the captain's face as he looked at Terror Jim, whose face was battered to a jelly, remarking:

"Seems he couldn't. And the other man ironed too. Pull him out. Let him lie on the floor till he comes to."

Then, turning to Larry, he said, sternly:

"You're a strong man, but don't presume too much on your strength. You've done a brutal deed, and it will go hard with you to-morrow. Go in there."

Larry went quietly in, but turned as they locked the door to say:

"Will you hear me a word, sir?"

"What is it?" asked the captain.

"Only this, sir. That man called himself a fighter and set on me, ironed as I was. I had to fight."

"Couldn't you have called for help?" asked the captain, more kindly.

Larry smiled rather proudly.

"I suppose I could, sir," he answered; "but in the mean time he would have given me something like what I gave him."

"Well," said the captain, coldly, "men who take the law into their own hands can't grumble if they're punished. There's another charge against you to-morrow."

So saying, he went away, and Larry, left alone at last, threw himself on the stool and began to revolve the misfortune of the day. The more he thought, the blacker looked everything round him.

Twice had he been forced into a fight, and each time his victory seemed to have made matters worse for him.

He could not bring himself to lie down on the camp-bed where Terror Jim had been stretched. He preferred to sit on the stool and meditate, while the more he thought, the more gloomy he got.

He began to wish he had never surrendered to Davis, but had fled the country, and then, when he thought of his wife, left alone in the cottage with the baby, and of Terror Jim's dark hint that "Snoopey was there" he rose and began to pace uneasily up and down the cell.

He heard the clock strike nine, and the people in the cells had sunk to silence.

The time wore on, and again the clock struck, when he heard a voice in the outer office say:

"Yes, that's the name. I've come to offer bail for him."

Larry's heart gave a joyful bound. He recognized Paul Van Beaver's voice.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAUL'S HUMILIATIONS.

WHEN Mr. Marcellus Skinner sunk to the floor in the presence of all his men, it was with a sense of physical pain and weakness that overpowered even his mortification. He had been used to bullying his way all his life, and he had suddenly met a man who overcame him with one blow.

He had sufficient resolution to sit on his chair and watch the conclusion of payment, seeing every man after Larry Locke demand the old scale and march out defiantly. When the last had gone he said faintly to Tom Trainor:

"I'm hurt; send for the doctor."

He had been carried out by some of the men who wished to curry favor with the boss, and was taken to his home near by, where the doctor examined him and told him what was the matter.

"Is there much danger?" he asked, in a low whisper, for he was in pain.

The doctor looked grave.

"Not if you keep quiet; but broken ribs are always liable to wound the lungs. How did it happen? A fall?"

"No; a villain assaulted me. He must be punished. Oughtn't he to be?"

He caught his breath, and anxiously awaited the reply, which came at once:

"Of course he ought. It's a felonious assault. The man should smart for it. Have you any witnesses to it?"

"Plenty, doctor. My boy Tom, for one. Couldn't he swear to an assault?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not a lawyer. Haven't you one? Send for him."

Skinner turned his gaze round the room till it rested on Paul Van Beaver. The nephew had accompanied him to the house, where the uncle, with ostentatious charity, had given him a room in the attic, while Tom Trainor had been put into the gorgeous apartment formerly occupied by Paul, when he had seemed to be a veritable favorite of fortune.

"Come here," he whispered.

Paul obeyed, quietly.

"You've studied law, haven't you?" asked the injured man in a husky whisper.

Paul bowed gravely.

"I have, sir. If I had had another year's living secured, I could have passed; but it's no use thinking of that now."

And he sighed slightly.

Marcellus eyed him searchingly.

"Would ye like to be a lawyer?" he asked.

"It's no use wishing, sir. I have to earn my living," said Paul, quietly.

"Go and get that Larry Locke punished for me, and I'll see ye pass," said Skinner, in a low, eager tone. "Get him punished. Put him in the State Prison. Show ye're a lawyer, and I'll see ye get the means."

Paul shook his head.

"That's impossible, sir."

"Impossible? why?" asked his uncle. "There's lots of men would do it, but you're my nephew. I don't want to be too hard on ye, only to take that wicked pride outer ye."

Paul compressed his lips and drew back.

"Let some one else do it, sir. I'm only your clerk now—I'm not a lawyer."

"But why won't ye do it?" asked his uncle, querulously.

Paul looked him in the eye.

"Because I saw it all, sir. You've no cause to complain. You struck Larry first, and he only fought in self-defense."

Marcellus Skinner regarded him with an evil scowl and turned away.

"Very well," he said. "I'll remember that against you. Tommy, boy, go and tell Mr. Scriven I want to see him."

"Tommy, boy," obeyed with the eagerness he always showed, and old Skinner remained quiet till the doctor had bandaged him up and gone away, leaving Paul by the bedside.

Then the uncle said, in a low, evil tone:

"So ye wouldn't oblige your old uncle, eh, Paul? Ye wouldn't?"

"I couldn't, sir, if you mean to take active measures of revenge against Larry Locke. He wouldn't have touched you if you hadn't struck at him first."

The old man smiled in a ghastly way.

"So ye said before—so ye said. I suppose ye think ye've only to wait till I die to come into my shoes—hey, Paul?"

Paul started and flushed angrily.

"You know well enough I thought no such thing," he said. "My grandfather had a right to do as he would with his own. To be sure, I did expect—"

"Shut the door," interrupted his uncle, sharply.

Paul obeyed with some surprise.

"Come here," continued Marcellus. "I want to tell you something, young man."

Paul came to the bedside and Marcellus looked at him fixedly before he spoke, and then it was with some difficulty and a good deal of pain.

"Paul," he said, "you never knew how my father came to alter his will, did you?"

"No, sir," said Paul, coldly. "It was done, and that is enough."

Marcellus smiled in the same painful way.

"Ay, ay," he said, "that's enough for you; but you weren't treated so bad, after all. I've only got the property for my life, and I can't leave it to my Tom. You're safe to get it, if I die."

"I'm aware of that," answered Paul, still more coldly. "What of it?"

Skinner began to chuckle, but stopped with a grimace of pain.

"If I die, you get it all," he said; "but how if you die first?"

"Then, under the will, it goes to my mother's next heir," said Paul—"after your death."

"Yes, yes, that's just it—to Em's next heir, after me. To Em's next heir. Yes, yes!"

He lay there grinning to himself, as if much amused at something or other, and said nothing more for some time.

At last they heard a noise below stairs, and Tom Trainor came up, with a thin man whom Paul knew to be a lawyer in good practice in Holesburg, to whom Skinner said:

"Come here, Mr. Scriven; I want to see you. Here I lie, struck down by a villain. He hit me with a sledge-hammer; wanted to kill me. I want to get even with him. How can I do it?"

"Why, swear a complaint, of course," said the lawyer at once. "Feligious assault. Have him sent up for five years."

Skinner seemed delighted.

"That's it; that's just it. Will you draw up the papers, and the names of witnesses; will you take them; will you?"

"Certainly," said the lawyer.

Skinner turned his head to scowl at Paul.

"Git out of the room," he said. "When I want ye I'll send for ye."

Paul bowed and went out without a word. It seemed to him as if his cup of humiliation were growing fuller daily; and as he went to his attic room to muse, he said to himself:

"Oh, what a fool I was, when I was rich, as I thought, not to have learned something by which I could make an honest living! Here I am, a dependent and a pauper, and he takes a pleasure in insulting me. If I had only had an inkling of what was coming, when my grandfather was alive, how differently I should have behaved!"

But all his thoughts brought him no sort of consolation, for as matters stood he was a helpless dependent.

True, the will of his grandfather as proved gave his uncle only the life interest in the Skinner estate, which was to come to Paul after Marcellus Skinner's death, but in the mean time there was nothing to prevent his uncle from letting him starve to death if he chose.

And if Paul died before Marcellus, the latter became the next relative of Paul's mother, as the invalid had maliciously hinted to the young man.

Buried in gloomy thoughts, Paul sat in his attic in the dark till he heard the house-door closed below at the departure of the lawyer.

Very soon after, he heard the lumbering step of Tom Trainor coming up-stairs, and Tom opened the door without knocking, to look in and say gruffly:

"Mr. Skinner wants you. Hurry up."

"Very good," said Paul, quietly. "I'll come."

"You'll come, will yer?" retorted Tom, with a growl. "You'd better come, I tell you. The old man's goin' to bounce yer."

Paul came out of his room at once and confronted Tom, saying angrily:

"Look here, you, sir, my uncle is one man and you're another. I stand a good deal from him, but not from you. Get out of my way, or I'll knock you down!"

Tom drew back in some alarm, saying:

"Tain't none of my doin's, Paul. He told me."

"Very well," said Paul, sharply, "then say what he told you and make no comments of your own. I'm going."

And he went to his uncle's room.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISFORTUNES.

WHEN Paul reached the sick-room he found Marcellus Skinner flushed with the first fever of his injury, and looking as spiteful as possible.

As soon as he entered, the mill-owner began at him irritably:

"Why didn't you come quicker? I sent Mr. Trainor after you, and he's next to me in this house."

"I came as soon as he told me," returned Paul, keeping down his temper.

"Ye lie!" retorted Marcellus. "I heard ye on the passage, squabbling with him. Now mark my words: I'm going to put an end to this. I've stood a deal from you because you're my nephew. Now it's got to stop."

"What has got to stop?" asked Paul.

"This talking back to Mr. Trainor. He's your superior now."

"My superior?" echoed Paul, stung at last.

"Yes, your superior—in everything. I'm boss of this concern, and I say it. If I tell you to black his boots you'll do it."

"I should do no such thing," retorted Paul.

"You wouldn't?"

"No, sir, and you know it."

Marcellus glared at him with impotent fury a moment, and then burst out:

"Get out of my house, you ungrateful whelp! After all I've done for you to turn on me like that! Get out! Never let me see your face again! You're discharged! Do you hear? I discharge you. Get out! Go! Starve if you like. I've done with you."

For a moment Paul was stunned by his sudden violence, and then he drew himself up proudly and answered:

"Well, I'm glad of it, uncle. You've done it yourself. You were my mother's only brother, and I've borne much from you on that account, but it's all over now. Good-by. You won't refuse to say that, I hope."

"Get out, ye pauper!" was all the reply deigned by Marcellus, and then Paul went up to his own room and packed up his trunk with all that remained of his former splendor—not much now—and carried the box down-stairs himself to the hall.

Thence he went to the kitchen and told the waiter, who remembered him as a boy, that he would send for the trunk next day.

The man promised to take it into his own room and see it was not disturbed.

"No one sha'n't hurt it, Mr. Paul," he added, "and I'd rather lose my place than let that upstart, Tom Trainor, interfere. Why, I remember him jest a common 'prentice, and he puts on more lugs than a juke now."

"Never mind, John," said Paul, quickly. "My uncle has a right to do what he will with his own. Good-by."

Then he went out into the street in the darkening twilight, and heard the clocks strike eight as he took his way toward Larry Locke's cottage.

He had no very clear idea of what he was going to do, but he remembered Larry's offer of friendship, and he had but ten dollars in his pocket, the savings of a month.

He had no idea that Larry had yet been arrested, for he knew that a charge of felonious assault could not be sustained in court, and he did not know how far his uncle's spite against the free-spoken foreman might go.

He walked rapidly along and soon cleared the outskirts of Holesburg and found himself on the dusty highway leading to Larry's cottage on the hill.

About half-way there he met a wagon with some men in it, and recognized the glitter of brass buttons in the starlight, from which he judged that the police were taking in some prisoners.

"Tramps, probably," he said to himself. "It's a good thing they've begun. Those fellows have got to be a nuisance. Who knows though? I ought not to talk against them. I may have to turn tramp myself, soon."

He walked on till he saw the outlines of Larry's cottage against the sky on the top of the hill, and noticed that it was dark at every window.

"I wonder if they've gone to bed so early?" he said to himself. "Larry isn't usually so. I'll try to get in, anyway."

He came up to the house and found all dark and silent, but the front door was wide open.

"Hallo!" he cried, stopping at the door. "Any one in here? Larry! Oh, Larry!"

There was no answer and he went in a little to listen.

Presently he heard the sound of some one moving in an inner room, and called:

"Who's there? Is that you, Larry?"

There was still no answer, but the sound of moving went on.

Then he heard a dull shock, as if some one had made a leap down on the ground outside, followed by the sound of running feet. In a moment it flashed over him that something was wrong, and he darted out of the house and round to the rear in time to see a man running away with a bag on his shoulder toward the open fields in a crouching attitude.

"Stop thief!" shouted Paul instantly, and he set off after the man, who ran with amazing speed across the little kitchen garden till he came to the low fence.

Paul saw him throw over the bag and vault the fence after it, so he followed as fast as he could.

Young and vigorous, and a good runner, Paul followed, and being unburdened with a load, soon found himself gaining on the thief, whoever he was.

This became evident from the fact that the man dropped the bag a moment later and ran on, but Paul, declining to be delayed by this stratagem, pursued faster than ever, and at last came up with the thief.

He had almost got his clutch on him when the man suddenly stopped and squatted down unexpectedly.

The next moment Paul stumbled over him, falling and scraping his hands severely from the rate at which he was going, and before he could recover himself, the thief was up and away again, plunging into a field full of Indian corn higher than his head, in which he succeeded in finally eluding his pursuer.

Then at last Paul retraced his steps to the house, finding the bag on the way, and in it a collection of clothing and small things that he knew to have been at Larry's house, none of them of much value.

"It must have been a sneak-thief," he said to himself, "and Larry must have gone out to some neighbor's with Molly. I'll go and wait for them."

He retraced his steps to the house, but was surprised to see lights moving about, and several men with lanterns and big clubs hunting round it excitedly calling to each other.

"Which way did he go, Jimmy?"

"Here's his thrack beyant the path."

"Oh, the murderin' thafe!"

"How well he knew Larry was away."

"Ah, begorra, av he'd been here, the man wad ha' had a hard time."

Paul came up to the fence and hailed them:

"Hallo! I've found what he stole. Is that you, Maguire?"

He recognized the voice of one of the crane-men, but his hail brought a rush toward him, and one man shouted:

"Tis the thafe! Give him ballyhoo, b'ys."

"I'm no thief," shouted back Paul. "I'm Paul Van Beaver. Don't you know me?"

"Tis Misther Paul!" cried Maguire, and he came up to the fence asking: "And how the devil did ye come round here at all, Misther Paul? Sure, here's blazes to pay, intirely, and they've arristed Larry Locke, and Mrs. Larry is nigh kilt wid the baby wid fright, and what does it all mane, anyhow?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Paul. "I came here to see Larry, found the door open, saw a man running off, chased him, and got this bag. That's all. What's this you say about Larry being arrested?"

The men had come round now, recognizing him, and Maguire answered:

"Sorra one of us knows, but Mrs. Locke came in like a wild woman wid the baby, and tould us how she had to jump out of the back windy, and a man was kickin' in the front door when she left, and—"

"Where is she now?" asked Paul hurriedly.

"At my house, sir, and you're kindly welcome to come there, Mr. Paul."

"But who will take care of this house?"

"The b'ys will do that, sir. Mike Lancy and Tom Donnelly will stay till Larry comes back, and bad luck to the thief that tries any more to-night."

"I don't think he will," said Paul in a thoughtful tone. "I think that man has taken more than was in the bag. I must see Mrs. Locke at once."

He and Maguire went over to the house of the crane-man, which lay about half a mile nearer to Holesburg, and as soon as their footsteps were audible, Molly came out, very pale and much excited to meet them.

As soon as she saw Paul, she began to sob and tell him what had happened, to which he listened with much agitation.

As soon as she had told her story, he said, comfortingly:

"But they can't hold Larry on the charge. It was only a blow in self-defense."

"Oh, Mr. Paul, do you think so?" she said, earnestly. "Larry says how you was bred to be a lawyer. Won't you defend him?"

"Certainly I will," said Paul, with some hesitation; but I warn you that I have not been admitted to the bar; I will do the best I can. The first thing is to get him admitted to bail."

Molly drew him to one side to whisper:

"No, that's not the first thing, Mr. Paul. I daresn't tell any one but you, but I'm afeard I've been robbed of all the money we had saved to pay off the mortgage."

Paul, much concerned, asked where it was, and Molly began to cry again.

"I hid it where I thought no one would find it, but when I took the baby I was that frightened I clean forgot it. It's in the mattress of our bed, Mr. Paul. Feel at the bottom. There's a slit there, and it's pinned inside."

"All right," said Paul, hastily, "I'll go and look for it. Wait till I come back."

He went away, to return half an hour later very pale, saying:

"My poor Molly, the money's gone."

CHAPTER XV.

IN COURT.

MR. JUSTICE WEEMS had just taken his seat on the bench next morning when he received a note handed him by one of the court officers which caused him to open his eyes wide and mutter to himself:

"Hum! hal! very good, very good. I'll put him through."

The note came from his millionaire friend, Mr. Skinner, and concerned the case of poor Larry Locke, who was thus confronted at once by a prejudiced magistrate.

The usual batch of "drunk and disorderlies," was worked off when the magistrate called:

"Locke, Laurence or Larry, complaint of felonious assault. Where's the complainant?"

Mr. Scriven rose to say:

"Please, your Honor, I appear for him. He is in bed; unable to appear, owing to the effects of the prisoner's atrocious violence. Here is the affidavit describing the assault, and the surgeon's certificate of the injury. We offer Mr. Thomas Trainor for first witness."

The officer sitting by Larry nudged him, and he went and took his place before the bar, while Tom Trainor was sworn.

Paul Van Beaver went up and stood by him, when the judge asked roughly:

"Who are you? What have you to do with this case?"

"I appear to defend Mr. Locke," said Paul, in his quiet way, "and also as an eye-witness of this whole affair."

"Are you a lawyer?" asked Weems, scowling.

"Enough to know that one need not be a certificated lawyer to plead in this court," returned Paul. "We wish to cross-examine the witnesses."

"Certainly, certainly," returned the magistrate, gruffly. "Bad case, bad case. Mr. Trainor, what do you know about this?"

Tom, in a manner that showed he must have previously rehearsed his story, entered into a glib account of the transaction as he professed to have seen it, from which it appeared to the judge that Marcellus Skinner had very mildly told Larry to leave the works; that he had refused so to do, and had picked up a sledgehammer and struck his employer in the side, without provocation.

When the story was over, Weems said to Paul with his usual gruffness:

"Go ahead. Ask your questions."

Paul began quietly:

"You say you saw Locke strike Mr. Skinner with a sledgehammer. Do they keep such things by the pay table?"

"I don't know," said Tom, sullenly. "I don't know where he got it. I saw him use it. I suppose they had it hidden among them."

"Did you see the whole affair?"

"Yes," said Tom, decidedly. "Every bit of it."

"And you're sure he had a sledge hammer?"

"Yes, I tell you."

"Did Mr. Skinner strike at Locke at all, that you saw?"

"No. He just ordered him out and he wouldn't go, nohow."

"He didn't even put his hands on him?"

"No, I tell you."

"Didn't he strike at him and miss him?"

"Not that I saw."

"Are you sure he might not have done so?"

"Yes, I am. I saw it all."

"That will do."

Tom stepped down and wiped his forehead damp with agitation.

The magistrate turned to Skinner.

"Any more witnesses?"

"None now, sir. We move commitment."

"Very well."

Then he turned to Larry.

"Well, what have you got to say?"

Paul interposed.

"We deny the whole thing and waive an examination. We can bring fifty witnesses, but they are all in the mills, and I learn this morn-

ing that this young man Trainor has threatened them all with discharge if they come here to testify. We ask to be held to bail in a reasonable sum."

The judge bent his brows.

"Hum! hal! this is an aggravated assault with a dangerous implement. I shall have to make it five thousand."

Larry uttered a low groan.

"Five thousand!"

Paul checked him with a gesture.

"Your Honor, rather than submit to such a bail as that, I'll take the stand myself. I saw the whole thing."

"Very well, very well," said Weems, gruffly.

"Tell your story, and Mr. Scriven can take his turn cross-examining."

Mr. Scriven rubbed his hands and looked as if he were pleased at the prospect, but as Paul told his story his face lengthened, and when it was over he said hastily:

"That puts a different face on the matter, your Honor. I fear my client has deceived me, and himself, too, in his irritation. I am willing to let Locke go on his own surety to appear. I understand he owns property—"

"Yes," said Larry, eagerly, "a house and—"

Paul pulled his sleeve and he stopped.

"Yes," pursued Scriven, rubbing his hands. "We are prepared to be lenient. We will take his personal bond to appear."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure," said the judge, trying to look bland, and so the matter was arranged at once.

Half an hour later Larry walked out of court a free man, and took his way back to his own cottage with Paul.

The young man was delighted at his easy escape, and kept thanking Paul all the way, till he noticed that Van Beaver was very silent and abstracted.

Then he asked:

"What's the matter, Mr. Paul? Are you out of sorts? What's happened?"

Paul had not told him of anything that had happened the night before. He had not had the heart to add to poor Larry's troubles when he was still in prison; but now he felt he had to tell it all.

"Larry," he began, gently, "I suppose you know I went to your house last night to see Molly, and that's how I learned of your arrest."

"Yes, Mr. Paul. Did you find anything wrong?"

His apprehensions were already awakened, and Paul turned them away skillfully by referring to his own troubles.

"No, Larry, but you'll wonder why I came to be going out there, and why I'm not at the office to-day, won't you?"

"No, no, Paul. I thought it was just your good heart, like when you first met me."

"Well, to tell you the truth, it was not that. The fact is, my uncle turned me out of the house last night, and I went to you to beg a night's lodging."

"And you shall have it," said Larry stoutly, "as long as there is a roof over my head and Molly's. We won't go back on you. It's a mean shame, all along of that sneaking Trainor. I'd like to put a head on him, and I believe I will when this trouble's over."

"The trouble's not over," answered Paul very gravely. "When I went to your house I found the door open, Molly gone—"

Larry uttered a cry and staggered back.

"Molly gone!" he almost shrieked. "My Molly! It can't be—what—how—"

"Be quiet," interrupted Paul firmly. "Be quiet and hear me out. Molly had taken the baby over to John Maguire's for safety. She's all safe. Don't be afraid. But the door was open, and a man was in the house hunting for things. He heard me and ran. I chased him, and he dropped part of his plunder. But now, Larry, hear up. Here comes the worst. I find from Molly she had hidden some money in a mattress. It's gone. That's what I wanted to tell you."

To his surprise, the news seemed to affect Larry but little; for he drew a sigh of relief and answered quietly:

"Is that all, Mr. Paul? I thought it was worse than that. I thought—never mind."

"Why, Larry," said Paul amazed. "I thought to hear you rave at this. Molly told me of it with tears in her eyes. Said it was all her savings to pay off the mortgage on the place."

Larry threw up his head proudly.

"Tis not a little thing like that worries me, Mr. Paul. I can take care of myself as long as I've these two arms. Six years ago I came here a ragged tramp. 'Twas on this very road you met me. I hadn't but eighteen cents in the world. Now I've earned a house and lot, and I'm not going to give it up easy. Do you remember what you gave me when I first saw you, Mr. Paul?"

Paul smiled carelessly.

"I'm sure I forget. Little enough."

"You gave me a dollar and five cents, and you hadn't been gone three minutes before a big tramp called Terror Jim tried to go through me. I knocked him stiff and me only a boy."

Now some one's a-trying to take my house from me. I tell you, Mr. Paul, they've called me a Man of Iron and they'll find me so."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MORTGAGE.

MR. MARCELLUS SKINNER, looking paler than his wont and a good deal thinner, but restored to health again, his broken ribs healed, was driving into Holesburg, three months after the little trouble at the mill, with Tom Trainor on the dog-cart seat beside him, when they passed a cottage and saw a comely young woman spreading some linen to dry in the garden, while a baby lay in its cradle in the open air, kicking up its fat legs and crowing.

Tom nudged the millionaire, saying:

"That's Locke's cottage, sir."

Skinner scowled and cursed under his breath, observing:

"I'd like to get even with that fellow. Scriven says the assault's no good, with all those men ready to swear I struck first. I wonder what has become of him? Have you heard?"

Tom nodded.

"He's working out in Ohio, and that fellow Paul's with him. He'll have to soil his white hands, curse him!"

Skinner grinned approvingly.

"That's right, Tommy boy. Curse him well. He thinks he's a fine fellow, because he's a Van Beaver, and because the will makes him next heir, but we'll show him, some day."

Tom made an impatient grunt.

"Why couldn't ye have the will fixed different?" he said, sullenly. "You was round, you told me, and got the old man to alter it. Why couldn't he alter it so I'd get a sheer? I'm his flesh and blood, as much as Paul."

"That ain't the reason, Tommy boy. I had a hard time to get him to do what he did, and he wouldn't ha' done it, only he was down sick, and I worked on it. Hello! Why, there's Scriven a-comin' this way. What does he want, I wonder?"

They saw the lean lawyer, who had a yellow, dried-up appearance, coming up the road behind a sober old black horse, as they left Larry's cottage behind them.

"Hello, Scriven, where away?" asked Skinner, as the dog-cart met the old black.

Mr. Scriven pointed with his whip to the cottage at the top of the hill.

"Over yonder to collect some money," he said.

Skinner turned round in his seat, and his face lighted up with eagerness.

"Not at Larry Locke's?" he said, in tones that trembled in spite of himself.

Scriven nodded.

"That's the man. Let me see: you had some trouble with him, didn't you? I've almost forgotten. I've so many cases."

Skinner kept down his emotion, to say in an indifferent manner:

"Yes. I'd almost forgotten it myself. Does he owe you any money?"

"No, not me. A client of mine. Old Peter Briggs. He lends out a good deal on mortgages. There's a little balance left. That's all, good-day."

He was shaking up his horse, when Skinner said eagerly:

"By-the-by, if you have any trouble about it, let me know, and I'll buy the mortgage from Briggs at the face value any time. I am looking for investments all round, you know, and mortgages are always safe."

Scriven nodded rather coldly.

"I'll tell him. Good-day."

Then he drove on, and Skinner began to chuckle to himself, till Tom asked:

"What's the matter with yer?"

Skinner smote his knee and chuckled more than before as he said:

"Tommy boy, I've got the darned skunk. I've got him, I reckon. I'm a-going to Peter. I know him like a book. Oh, if I had only known this three months ago! I remember hearing how he'd ben robbed, but I never dreamed of such a bit of luck as this."

"Why, what d'ye mean?" asked Tom, crossly. "You're allers havin' secrets, you are."

"Secrets?" echoed Skinner, with another chuckle of deep enjoyment. "No, no, it's too good to keep, too good to keep. Say, Tom, don't you remember how they had it in the paper, the time that devil, Larry, was in the station-house, how he nigh killed a tramp called Terror Jim?"

"Well, what of that?" asked Tom, sulkily.

"Only this, Tom: I seen that tramp, and he told me a heap."

"When? What did he tell you?"

"It was a good week after the muss, Tommy, boy, and when I was beginning to come downstairs, that a man asked to see me, and sent in a name I couldn't well refuse."

Tom looked at him with surprise.

"What name was that?"

"Never you mind, Tommy," said Skinner, in an evasive way. "I've seen a good deal of this world before I came home to see the old man and make my peace. Anyway I knew Terror Jim. Me and him were once aboard— Never

mind—that's nothing to do with this story. Anyway I let him in, and he told me how his pal on the road, one he called Snoopey, had been sneaking round Larry's cottage the very day we had the muss, and seen the wife pokin' away some money in a mattress, and how he sent Snoopey back there at night, as soon as he heard of Larry's arrest, and Snoopey got in and stole the money. What do you think of that?"

"I d'no," said Tom, stupidly. "What of it?"

"Don't ye see, Tom? Why, boy, how much d'ye think there was in that mattress?"

"How much?"

"Seven hundred dollars exactly, Tommy, and all in fifty-dollar bills."

"Well, what of that?"

Old Skinner made an impatient movement.

"You ain't used to bein' so dumb, Tommy, boy. Just as soon as I heard it I said: 'That's savings for something or other,' and to-day shows what it is. He saved that money to pay off the mortgage, and that's just what Scriven's after to-day."

"But what's that to us?" asked Tom.

"Nothen' at all, Tommy, only this: Cranemen can't save up no seven hundred dollars a second time in three months here, nor in Ohio nuther, and he's a-going to fall short in paying Peter Briggs."

A smile of dawning intelligence began to cross Tom's countenance, and he ejaculated:

"Well, dad, you're a deep one, you are."

Mr. Skinner nodded complacently.

"I ain't generally called a fool, Tommy, boy, not since I cut my wisdom-teeth, though I will admit I come near makin' a darned fool of myself, twenty-three years ago. If I'd ha' married your mother, boy, you'd ha' been a lawful one no doubt; but we'd ha' been grubbin' in the dirt like Larry Locke, and it was only 'cause you didn't have no legal hold on me, the old man took water at last. Oh, he was a proud old pig, he was, with his Van Beavers; and he didn't want any one to know you was his flesh and blood as much as Paul. But I fooled him at the last, and now I've got the property, and if I can't leave it to you when I'm dead, I can give it to you, while you're alive, and me too, Tommy. And in the mean time, the sooner we get to Peter Briggs's house, the better for me, Tom. G'lang there."

He touched up the horses with the whip, and away rattled the natty dog-cart toward the part of Holesburg where Mr. Peter Briggs resided.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAWYER'S VISIT.

MOLLY LOCKE was hanging out the clothes to dry and singing at her work when the dog-cart passed, and she did not see the evil glance cast at her by old Skinner. She was singing at her work as if she had never known care, yet she had lived in the little cottage, alone with her baby, for three months, while Larry was hundreds of miles off, working in another State.

They had lost the money they had saved by long privation and hard work, and they knew that when the day came for the last payment on the mortgage they would not be able to raise half the sum.

The house had been robbed by Snoopey the tramp, and they knew well enough that they would never find him, short of a miracle, while Larry, through the lock-out, had been thrown out of work in the town.

Under these circumstances most men would have despaired, and most women would have sunk down helpless; but Larry had not earned the name of the "Man of Iron" without deserving it, and his wife never shed a tear after she had got him back safe from the clutches of the law.

"If there ain't work here, there's work in Ohio," Larry had said. "We ain't as bad off as we might be, Molly. We've got health and strength, and the rest will come to us. I'll have to leave you and baby awhile."

Molly had paled a little when she first heard that; but she clinched her teeth to keep down the feeling of weakness, and answered:

"If it must be, it must, Larry, boy. I can get on while you're gone. Lots of folks will give me washing."

And that was how she came to be hanging out the clothes in the garden when Skinner passed.

Alone in her little house, with her husband away, she had managed to keep herself and the baby decently, and sung as she toiled, as many another woman has done in her place.

Not all the heroes in America wear the epaulets of the general, and there are heroines at the washtub who face peril and misfortune as grandly as a tragedy queen, with all her graces.

Molly Locke, "Red Moll," carrot-haired foundling, brought up in a work-house, with no fine unknown parents to come and claim her in the last chapter and put silks and diamonds on her, may seem a coarse sort of a heroine to present to the cultivated reader, but then, you know, she couldn't help being born, and, having a clear right to live and pursue happiness in

her own way, she was doing the best she knew how, in taking care of baby Larry.

He didn't care whether he lived in a palace or a hovel, as long as he was warm and had enough to eat, and he had grown as strong as a young horse, so to speak, in the three summer months, while Larry was away in Ohio, quite unmindful of the fact that the house where he was born was mortgaged, and that old Peter Briggs might foreclose on his mother any day.

But Molly; had she forgotten?

One would have thought so, to hear her sing at her work, but she hadn't for all that, and if she had done so, she was very suddenly reminded of it by the smooth voice of Mr. Scriven behind her saying:

"Good-day, Mrs. Locke."

She turned round to face the old lawyer, with a flutter at her heart.

"Good-day, sir," she said. "Did you come to see Larry? I'm sorry he's away, but you know since the reduction at the mill, where he struck, he couldn't get any more work in Holesburg. But he's working, sir, and so am I, and we hope—"

"There, there," interrupted the old lawyer, not unkindly. "I know all about it, Mrs. Locke. Your husband was not to blame. But, the fact is, you know, Mr. Briggs says that he wants his money. Have you heard from your husband lately?"

"Yes, sir," said Molly, eagerly, "and he's saving money as fast as he can. If Mr. Briggs would only wait another year—"

Mr. Scriven pursed up his lips.

"I'm afraid that's not possible. You see, if Locke was working here, it would be different; but a man who roams about can't be depended on."

"Larry doesn't roam about," retorted Molly, with spirit. "If he had stayed here he would be half-starving, like all the rest of them. And you know we had the money saved, sir, when we were robbed; and that wasn't Larry's fault, was it?"

Scriven shrugged his shoulders.

"I've heard of that. It wouldn't have happened if you had had your money in a bank, like sensible people. The ignorance of the working-classes brings on half their troubles. However, that's none of my affair. The mortgage is due to-morrow. Are you ready to pay it?"

"No," returned Molly, desperately. "We can't pay it. If you'll give us time we can. We've got a hundred and eighty dollars saved, and that's all. If Mr. Briggs will give us a year we'll pay him in installments. That's what Larry says."

The old lawyer looked at her narrowly. He was not an unkind man, but business makes any one hard.

"I'll see what I can do for you," he said coldly, "but I warn you that I don't hope for much. Briggs is a close, hard man."

"I know he is," returned Molly, rather mournfully, "but he ain't unjust, and he knows we don't want to wrong him. Do what you can for us, sir, and I'll be so grateful to you."

"I don't hope for much," returned Scriven, and he went away, while Molly returned to her work.

But she could not sing any more. Even her high health and spirits had failed her at last; and she came very near crying as she took the baby's cradle into the house.

But she kept at her work as steadily as before, and every now and then she looked over Larry's last letter, in which he said:

"If he won't give you any more time, Mr. Paul says to let him go ahead. It will take three months to foreclose, and if the worst comes and we're sold out, you've got enough money to come here to me. But before the three months are up, I'll have the money raised somehow; for I've found the way to beat the bosses now."

"What can he mean?" she kept saying to herself as she read. "He has found the way to beat the bosses. What is it, I wonder?"

But she had no time to think over it or decide it, for it was coming on toward sunset, and she had a good deal to do.

By the time she had got in her clothes and prepared for supper it was dusk, and just then she heard a vehicle drive up and stop before the door.

Thinking it a message from Scriven, she hurried out, and saw a fancy dog-cart, with a tandem team, before the door, a groom at the horses' heads, while a tall, stout young man, extravagantly dressed, with a coarse, dissipated face, was coming up the path.

Molly recognized him in a minute as Mr. Thomas Trainor, and straightened into a statue of dignity as he advanced.

Tom, on the other hand, grinned affably, saying:

"Good-evenin', Molly."

"Mrs. Locke, if you please," retorted Molly.

"I'm not Molly to any but old friends."

"And ain't I an old friend?" asked Tom.

"Why, don't ye remember when we was kids in the County House together? Quite a change sence then, Molly. You've grown most uncommon handsome, sence then."

"Did you come here to tell me that?" asked

she, with a glitter in her eyes that showed she was angry.

Since she had lived alone so long, she had quite got over her terror of tramps, and always kept some weapon within reach, which she was not afraid to use.

Snoopey could not have gone through the house a second time with the ease he did before. Molly had become as bold as a tigress in defense of her young one.

Tom Trainor tried to laugh; but the effort was an awkward one.

"No, no," he said; "not exactly that, but surely it's no harm to tell you, is it?"

"What did you come for?" asked Molly, coldly. "You and me ain't friends, sir, and certainly my husband and you ain't."

"Why, Molly!" exclaimed Tom, in an injured sort of way. "I ain't got nothen' 'gainst him. Larry and me fit, six year ago, but we don't bear no malice."

"Then what did you come for?" asked she, not offering to move aside for him.

Tom hesitated a moment, and then said in a low tone of voice:

"It's something about the mortgage. I don't want the man to hear it."

Molly changed color at once.

"The mortgage? You ain't got anything to do with our mortgage," she said, hastily.

Tom shook his head and nodded in a very significant way.

"If you'll let me come in I'll show you if I haven't," he said, slyly.

Molly, looking at him as if she doubted her senses, slowly drew back and said:

"Tell me what you mean. I don't care who hears it. What is it?"

Tom drew closer.

"The old man's gone to Briggs and bought the mortgage," he said, "to get even on Larry for lammung him. You can tell whether he's likely to give ye any more time or not."

Molly listened, and her heart sunk within her, for she knew the meaning of what he said too well.

She braced her nerves sufficiently to answer him, however.

"Very well. Is that all?"

"If you'll let me come in," said Tom, in a pleading way, "I'll tell ye. I ain't the old man. I don't want to be hard on ye."

"What do you want to say?" asked she, with a vague fear of something impending.

Tom slipped into the house as she fell back, and immediately whispered:

"I don't want him to hear, ye know. Look here. I can get the old man to give ye all the time ye want. He'll do anything for me; anything in the world."

Molly stared at him incredulously.

"You? You do me a kind action? You help Larry? You? Why should you? You don't love him any too much."

Tom grinned and came closer.

"Maybe I don't; but I love some one else a heap, Molly; and I kin do what I say for her sake. D'ye know who I mean?"

Molly drew back a pace or two, with a strange gleam in her eyes, repeating in a half-whisper:

"You? you? What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am desperate fond of you, Molly," he answered, with a leer of affection.

"Larry's gone away to Ohio, and he won't never come back. The old man will take good care of that. Say, Moll, why shouldn't you and me be good friends, while he's gone? I'll get the old man to give ye time, Molly. Gosh, I'll do better than that, I'll get you the money, so he won't never know who give it to ye. And all I want in return is that you'll—"

He suddenly started back, as if he saw in her eyes, something that amazed him and frightened him too.

Molly had drawn back near the stove and had her hand on a pot of water that was simmering there.

His start came a moment too late, for before he could reach the door the pot of water nearly boiling, was emptied over his back, so that he ran yelling down the path faster than he had come, while Molly, wild with fury, had caught up a hot poker and was following him to the cart.

Tom Trainor was so thoroughly astounded and demoralized by the unexpectedly vigorous assault of the indignant Molly Locke that he ran to his cart as hard as he could go, leaped in without a word, and lashed up his horses before the groom could get to his place behind.

The consequence was that, when Molly reached the front gate, both horses were running away at a breakneck gallop and the groom was running also, as hard as he could, after the cart.

Then the angry woman stopped and began to tremble; for she thought of what she had done, as she went back to the house, her nerves all aquiver, and sat down to "have a good cry," as she expressed it.

But she took care to keep the road in sight while she wept, and that was the reason she saw, a very little while after, the yellow dog-cart coming back, Tom and all, and saw him stop before the door and begin to shake his whip and curse lustily, crying:

"You was darned smart, you was, Red Moll;

but I'll be even with you yet. You see if I don't. This is the last night you sleep in that house."

Molly, her tears gone the moment her anger flamed up again, stood in the door of her house and called back:

"It's lucky for you my husband's not home, you coward. He's whipped you twice, and the next time he'll make mince-meat of you."

"Who will?" shouted back Tom.

"Larry Locke, the Man of Iron," cried a voice in the road, as a man came running up.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME AGAIN.

YES, it was Larry himself, covered with dust as if he had traveled on foot a long way, a stick and bundle at his back; but he was running quite fast and Tom Trainor saw him.

The young man had no fancy to meet Larry a third time. As a boy he had beaten Tom at his best, and Tom had been sitting on an office stool and living on the fat of the land since that time, so that he was soft, puffy and unfit for a fight.

He just laid his whip on the horses and sent them off toward Holesburg at a gallop, while Molly uttered a scream of joy and came running out to hug her husband whose face was brown and sunburnt, while the old confident smile lighted it up.

"Oh, Larry, boy, Larry!" was all she could say, and it was not till she had him safe in the house that she could ask him:

"And where have you been and what have you been doing, Larry, boy?"

Larry gave her another hug.

"Never mind now. Where's baby?"

"Asleep in here."

And she showed him Larry, junior, sleeping like a top, and marked the tears that came into the father's eyes unconsciously as he kissed the slumbering child.

Then they went into the next room and sat down to supper, when Larry asked:

"What was that dirty villain doing in front of this house abusing you?"

Molly began to tremble at once.

"Promise me ye won't do anything to him, Larry. Remember how they put you in prison for striking Skinner."

Larry curled his lip slightly.

"Yes, I remember. He's rich and I'm poor. No, I won't do anything to him, Molly. I've learned a good deal since I went away. A poor man can't afford to lose his temper. How came he here?"

"He came back, Larry, to insult me, but I didn't mind that a bit. I'd given him cause enough to lose his temper, God knows."

Larry laughed.

"Hed hey! What did ye do?"

"Threw a kettle of hot water over him!"

"Good for you!" cried the workman, in a tone of great delight. "No, no, I won't hurt him now, Molly. You can take care of yourself and the baby, I see. But what made you drive him out?"

Molly colored deeply.

"He dared to come here and make love to me, thinking you were away."

Larry's eyes flashed for a moment, but he laughed again, saying:

"Well, well, I like that. And ye scalded him, did ye? Reckon he won't come again?"

Molly began to cry.

"Yes, but others will. Oh, Larry, Scriven was here to-day, and Briggs wants his money!"

"I thought he would," said Larry, quietly. "I came here on purpose, in case he did. Well, what did you tell him?"

"What you wrote me. I asked him for time."

"What did he say?"

"He said he'd speak to Briggs, but couldn't give us much hope. Then he went away, and Tom Trainor came in, soon after, and told how his father had bought the mortgage from Briggs."

"What?" ejaculated Larry.

"His father, Skinner, had bought Briggs's mortgage and wouldn't give us a day's time on it unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Larry, seeing she hesitated.

"Unless he persuaded him," returned Molly, in a low tone, coloring deeply. "That's why I threw the water over him."

Larry seemed to be struck by the news, for he became very thoughtful for a while, till Molly asked him:

"Well, where have you been and what have you been doing? I suppose the house has to go at last, but I'm not going to fret about it while you're able to work for us."

Larry raised his eyes to hers.

"I've been looking for the man that stole our money, Molly, and I've found him."

Molly started joyfully.

"Did you, indeed?"

"Yes; but it was no use. The money was gone, of course. But I got the man and his friend, Terror Jim."

"Well?" asked Molly, as he paused.

"Well, I found out a good deal about Boss Skinner that I didn't know before," said Larry, slowly. "I'm not so sure that we shall lose this little house, Molly."

"Oh, Larry," said the woman, trembling, "do you really mean it? Don't deceive me. If we've got to lose our savings, I'm not afraid to go out into the world again with you, dear. We came from the poor-house, and we can always go back there. But don't build up false hopes."

"I ain't building no hopes," said Larry, in his ungrammatical way. "I'm only telling what Mr. Paul said. He was bred a lawyer, and he's got admitted out in Ohio. I told him what I'd found, and he's a-workin' on it now. You wouldn't know him, Molly. He works dreadful hard now, and he never used to do no work at all when I first knew him."

"Ah, he was a good, kind gentleman," said Molly, sadly. "What a shame that his grandfather, after making him think all his life he was to have the mill, should turn round and leave it to Marcellus."

Larry said nothing in reply, for at that moment Larry, junior, began to stir in his cradle, and put all thoughts of everything else out of their heads, but the subject of the mortgage was recalled to them forcibly about an hour after dark, when a knock at the door was followed by the presence of a small boy, who asked, in a shrill tone:

"Which is Larry Locke?"

"I am," returned Larry.

"I'm from Snapper & Van Slack," said the small boy, rapidly. "This here's for you, mister. Here's the 'riginal."

He thrust a paper into Larry's hand, shook another before his face, and vanished, leaving the workman staring stupidly at the paper.

It was a summons on foreclosure of the mortgage, in the name of Marcellus Skinner, and Molly began to tremble again.

As for Larry, he folded up the paper and put it in his pocket, observing:

"You ain't got this house yet, Mr. Skinner, and you ain't going to get it. To-morrow I'll play my cards."

CHAPTER XIX.

LARRY'S VISIT.

THE Skinner Steel Works were in full blast, next day, but the master of the concern had gone out driving, and Tom Trainor was left in full control in the office, when Larry Locke made his appearance at the gate of the works and walked in, to be greeted, in less than five minutes thereafter by a great cheering, as the men left their tasks and crowded around him.

Three months had made a difference in them and in him. They all looked sullen, downcast and discontented, while Larry held his head up as proudly as ever, and his sturdy figure seemed the personification of strength.

"Well, Maguire," he said to one man, who had been a workman when he was an apprentice, but who had given in to the reduction, "and how does the world use you now?"

"Badly enough," said Maguire, gloomily; "but what's a man to do Larry? I've got five young-uns, and they've got to be kept in bread and butter and clothes. It's been hard scratchin' sence the cut-down, I tell ye. All the hands is in debt now."

"Ay, ay," put in Tom Macaulay, one of the rolling-men, "we're all in debt at the store, and the boss has got us where he wants us. 'Tain't no use to fight. We ain't got no show."

"How about the cranemen?" asked Larry. "Do the new hands you got in our places work as well as we did?"

The men were silent, and looked at each other uneasily, and Larry noticed that the cranemen, instead of deserting their tasks to crowd round him, kept aloof and went on with their work by themselves.

"They're all spies," whispered Macaulay. "and they know we hate 'em. We'll have to go back to work at once, or we'll be docked jist so much time."

Here they heard Tom Trainor's harsh voice from the office door:

"Halloo there, you men, what's the matter? What are you stopping work for?"

Larry watched them all, and saw the sullen, downcast look come over their faces, but not one of them ventured to answer Tom, and all dispersed to their work, scowling, but submissive, leaving the visitor standing alone in an open space of the works, so that Tom Trainor recognized him.

The young superintendent—for such was Tom's title in the works—hesitated for a moment, and the color flickered on his bloated face. He knew Larry had no right to be there, and that the discipline of the works remained in his—Tom's—hands. His father, in his place, would have swaggered up to Larry and ordered him out, but Tom Trainor was not Marcellus.

He hesitated, scowled, and then walked back to the office, from which he sent a message by the night watchman to say that "Larry must leave the works at once: no strangers were allowed inside."

Larry had watched the struggle going on in

Tom without appearing to notice it, and a slight smile of triumph appeared on his face when he saw Trainor quail.

He followed Maguire to his place, where he was working, and observed quietly:

"I say, Jim, didn't it never strike you fellers you could better yourselves if you was to organize and git together?"

Maguire shook his head.

"No, it ain't no use. We're all down now. We daresn't strike. A week would fotch us. We hain't got no savings now."

"Well," replied Larry, "but s'pose you was to git together. 'Tain't to say you need strike. Look here, I want to see you to-night. I've learned a heap since I went West."

Maguire cast him a quick glance, for the tone in which Larry spoke was full of meaning; but he only nodded gloomily, saying:

"All right; I'll come. But it won't be no use."

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," returned Larry; "but there's no harm trying."

And then he saw the watchman come up—a stout, powerful man, new to the works, who said rudely:

"Here, you get out of this. It's ag'in' the orders to have strangers here."

"But I'm not a stranger," returned Larry, coolly. "I know the old place by heart. Why, man, I used to work here long before you were ever thought of."

The watchman looked him over from head to foot to answer sourly:

"The blazes you did! Well, just you git now, and darned quick too, or I'll break your darned back fur ye."

Larry smiled in his most provoking manner as he answered:

"Would ye, now, would ye? I s'pose you're quite a fighter."

"I'll show you whether I ain't," said the watchman, sternly. "Are you going to git, or will I have to put you out?"

Larry smiled again, still more provokingly.

"I wouldn't like to put sich a good-looking man to so much trouble. I'll go at once. But ain't it a little rough puttin' out a man who jest came in to say howdydo to a few of his friends?"

"That ain't none of my biz," returned the watchman, rather more mildly. "The boss give me his orders, and I'm a-going to see them done, you kin bet."

"That's right," returned Larry, placidly, and he began to walk slowly toward the gate, accompanied by the watchman. "Orders should be obeyed. What's your name?"

"Never you mind," was the stiff reply. "My name's strike from the shoulder when I git mad, and don't you forget it."

Larry made no answer till he got to the gate, when the watchman was turning back to leave him. Then the short man suddenly laid his hand on the other's arm and said quietly:

"Look a-here, friend, I ain't got nothen against you, but though orders is orders, there's a way of obeying 'em, and there's another not so good. You said jest now you'd break my back fur me. Now we're outside, and I tell ye, ye can't do it."

The watchman, for the first time, looked at his companion with great care, and his face took on an expression of something very like evasion of the issue, as he said sullenly:

"I ain't no darned fool, lookin' fur fights fur fun. You go your way and I'll go mine. If ye come into the works I'll lam ye."

Larry laughed and let go the other's arm.

"Aha!" he said, "I see jest what kind of man you are. You're one of the roosters that daresn't fight off his own dunghill."

The watchman started angrily.

"Ye lie, ye darned skunk. You git out of this darned quick. I don't want none of your lip, and I won't take it."

"Well," said Larry, quietly, "what are you going to do about it, then? I reckon you're nothing but an old bleat, anyway. You daresn't even tell your name."

"Daresn't I?" cried the watchman, fiercely. "I'd have you know I'm Chris Hargous, I am, and they called me the king when I used to run on the canal. Now then, who are you?"

"My name's Larry Locke," replied Larry, in his quietest tones.

Instantly the watchman jumped back into the works, and his face turned white, for he had heard of Larry before.

"I ain't able for you," he stammered. "I ain't on the fight, I tell ye."

"Just now you said you was," returned Larry, advancing toward him. "Now I'll just give you a chance to show what you're made of. I'll wrastle you a square-holt, Mr. Hargous."

But Hargous backed away from him, crying out:

"You let me alone. I ain't done nothen to you. You ain't got no call to pick a muss with me."

Larry pointed his finger at him.

"Here's a brave watchman," he cried. "Why, a gang could clean out the works, and you wouldn't say nothing to 'em, would ye?"

"You leave me alone," was all Hargous would

reply, as he backed away, and Larry finally turned on his heel, remarking:

"Well, my friend, I reckon it's lucky you're a coward. It has saved your bones to-day."

Hargous drew in his breath with a hissing sound. The man was not a coward, after all, and the word stung him as nothing else would or could have done.

Without another word he came up to Larry, and growled:

"I'll wrestle ye, darn ye."

CHAPTER XX.

LARRY'S NEXT FIGHT.

LARRY might not have taunted Hargous so keenly but for the fact that he felt very angry at being turned out of the works in which he had served his apprenticeship.

The unexpected dignity of the watchman—for there is dignity in the acceptance by a man of a contest in which he knows he will probably be beaten—compelled a certain amount of respect, and Larry in his turn began to feel that he had gone too far in bullying a man who, after all, was only doing his duty with extra rudeness.

However, there was no help for it now, so he only said, as he stretched out his arms:

"You said you'd break my back. Now let's see ye do it."

The next moment the men grappled, and Hargous was thrown with a violence that knocked all the breath out of his body for several seconds, when Larry helped him up, saying kindly:

"No malice, I hope, friend. You and me ain't a fair match. Besides, why should we fight, when we're both workmen? Our kind ought to stick together against the bosses."

Hargous could not speak for a moment, but when he could he said slowly:

"You're a darned good man. I ain't no slouch at the square-holt myself, but you're as strong as a steam-engine. No, there ain't no malice. I ain't a hog, to want more'n's good fur me."

"Then you won't make no more fuss if I come into the works to see my friends?" said Larry, inquiringly.

Hargous hesitated.

"Not unless the boss tells me to put ye out. If he does, I'm going to do it."

Larry looked at him with some surprise.

"D'ye think ye're able?" he asked.

Hargous nodded.

"If the boss tells me, I am. I ain't able for you in a fight; but if the boss gives the order I'm going to do it, if I have to go under."

Then he went away, and Larry took his departure into the streets.

He kept a keen lookout as he walked, and presently spied Marcellus Skinner coming toward the works, in a buggy.

As the owner passed Larry hailed him from the walk, and Marcellus, not at first recognizing him, pulled up, so that Larry was able to get to the horse's head.

When Marcellus saw who it was his brows contracted, and he growled out:

"What are you doing? How dare you stop me, sir?"

"I wanted to say a word to you," said Larry, as sternly as himself, and, as he spoke, he seized the bridle in his strong grasp.

Immediately Marcellus raised his whip and aimed a cut at the man holding his horse, vociferating:

"Let go my horse, you scoundrel, or I'll have you arrested."

Larry saw the cut coming, partly parried it with his arm, and at the same time managed to grasp the whip, which he held like a vise saying:

"Keep your temper, you old fool. Do you want me to pull you out of that buggy and thrash you with your own whip before the whole town? Keep still. I've got a word to say to you and I'm going to say it. Do you understand?"

Marcellus, livid with fury, tugged at the whip in vain, while Larry proceeded:

"You've bought the mortgage on my place, and maybe you think you're going to turn me out—*Let go that whip!*"

He had become irritated at last, and, as he spoke, with a sudden twitch he snatched the whip away from Skinner and threw it down on the pavement, continuing:

"Answer me, quick! Do you intend to turn me out or not?"

Marcellus ground his teeth.

"Yes, curse you, yes! You're strong, and you're young; I know all that; but I'll be even with you for this. I'll drive you away from here; you see if I don't!"

"That's all I wanted to know," returned Larry, coolly. Now I've got a word to say. You can't drive me out of Holesburg. I've gone away all I mean to go, and now I've come back to stay. Do you understand that? Another thing I want to tell you. I'm going to work in the Skinner Mills before I'm six weeks older, and I'm going to have my house, too."

Skinner curled his lip. He saw it was no use trying anger on Larry Locke.

"I'd like to know how you mean to do it," he

said, with a sneer. "You'll have your house if you pay me my money, and not without."

"No," answered Larry, sharply. "I shall pay the money, but not to you."

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"As you please. You can pay my lawyer, if you like; but if you don't, I take the house as soon as I get judgment. And as for getting work at the mill you can't do it. I wouldn't take you in for half wages."

"And I'm not going in for half wages," was Larry's quiet reply.

"No," continued Marcellus, "nor for quarter wages either. You're a torn demagogue, and bound to make trouble wherever you go."

"But for all that," retorted Larry, "I'm going to come back there, and on full wages, too."

"And how are you going to manage that?" asked Marcellus, with another sneer.

"You'll find that out in three weeks," said Larry, quietly. "I want to give you notice that by that time you'll pay all your men the old scale, dating from last pay-day, or you'll never roll another rail. Good-day, sir. Remember what I've said. Here's your whip again, but don't you try to use it on no more men, or you may find you've made a little mistake, as you did once before."

He let go the horse's head, stepped back and picked up the whip, which he handed to Marcellus, who drove on without attempting any further violence.

Then Larry betook himself down the street to a certain small hotel in the far outskirts of the city, where he found a man with a grave, rather stern face, waiting for him in the small, dingy office.

At least it seemed as if the man were waiting for him, for as soon as Larry came in the other looked up from his paper, saying:

"Well, brother, what luck? Are any of them inclined to join at once? The council won't let me wait long if there's no chance of an organization."

"I think we'll make one to-morrow," was Larry's answer, "but you must remember these men are all cowed down and it will take time to rouse them up."

"That's no affair of mine," returned the stern man. "I'm here to do the muster in, and if you once start a council the rest will follow. We want them all. This is the only place that's left outside now, and when that's in line with the others, we can make Monopoly come down."

"Well," said Larry, doubtfully, "I'll try what I can do, Mr. Shaw; but you'll have to do most of the talking. I'll bring Maguire to you to-night, and if we get him and a few others in, the rest will follow. What time will you meet us?"

"Whenever you say. I think seven will be the best time, because the men will have finished supper and will want something to do."

"How would it do if you came to my house and I got the men to meet there?" asked Larry.

"A very good place," returned Shaw. "I'll come there if you'll tell me where it is. In the mean time how are you going to let the men know?"

"I'll notify them myself," said Larry, and then he gave his companion directions how to find the cottage and departed.

He took his way straight back to the works, and walked in at the gate without being noticed at first.

Then he went to Maguire, who was one of the rollersmen, and said to him in a low voice as he passed:

"Come to my house as soon as you've had supper. Mr. Shaw's come."

"And who's Mr. Shaw?" asked Maguire, in a gloomy tone, as he went on with his work.

"Mr. Shaw," replied Larry, in the same guarded tone, "is the Master Workman for this district, and he's come here to get you all a chance to get back the old scale."

Maguire shook his head.

"Divil a chance have we, I'm afeard."

"Of course not, if we don't fight for it," said Larry, sharply. "There's no harm in hearing what the man has to say, is there?"

"No," assented Maguire, gloomily. "I'll come."

"And will you bring the boys with you?" asked Larry, eagerly.

Maguire nodded.

"I will that. But we're not going on strike, ye understand: it's no use."

"You'll not be asked to go on strike," returned Larry. "till everything's ready for success. Then, if you don't go on strike, you're not worthy of the name of American workmen. People will call you slaves."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECRET SOCIETY.

THAT evening at seven o'clock Larry was sitting at his cottage door smoking his pipe, while Molly was washing up the dishes, and singing as she worked, this time with real enjoyment.

What mattered it to her whether there was a mortgage hanging over the place or not, so long as Larry was back?

To her, Larry was the impersonation of

strength and knowledge, and there was nothing she deemed him incapable of doing.

Presently Larry saw the figure of a man coming down the road from Maguire's house, and several others straggling in from the city, so he got up and said to Molly:

"Bring out all the chairs ye can. We're goin' to have a meeting."

"A meeting?" she echoed. "A meeting of what, Larry, boy? We've no room for a meeting."

"We'll hold it outside," said Larry. "It's only to talk things over; it's the first step."

Then he went out to meet Maguire, who had a furtive look on his face, and said, in a low voice:

"I told the boys, and some of 'em are on the road; but av the boss gits hold of it, he'll bounce us all."

"Maybe he will—maybe he won't," said Larry. "We'll see about it when we git together."

"But it's no use," observed Maguire, in a gloomy way; "I told the boys that."

"Perhaps you told them wrong," said Larry, quietly. "Wait till Shaw comes. You men don't know your own strength. Come in and sit down on the bench."

Ten minutes later there were nearly twenty men gathered in the little front garden of Larry's cottage, a number sitting on the stone bench, the rest on logs, rocks and the few chairs the cottage contained, while the buzz of earnest conversation told that they were anxiously discussing the question of subsistence and how to better their position, though no one seemed able to tell how it was to be done, and Larry proffered no advice.

At last he said, in a tone of some relief:

"Ah! there comes Mr. Shaw at last. Now, boys, we'll see."

In at the front gate walked a quiet-looking man in plain gray clothes, who said, as if he had known them all:

"How are you, men? Are there any foremen here who are Knights?"

"No," answered Larry; "there are no Knights here, but they all want to join the Knights, Brother Shaw."

"No, no," expostulated Maguire. "We don't want to join nothing till we know what it is. We've tried strikes before, in '77, and what did we get by it?"

Shaw smiled gravely, as he answered:

"You're just the men we want in the Order—men who don't strike for nothing. Look here: how much do you make a week, and I'll tell you whether you can afford to strike or not."

Several men answered him, and he went on:

"That's just it. I heard before I came that you Holesburg men were getting just a quarter less than iron-workers were getting in the West. That's because you haven't got a Union and don't belong to the Knights of Labor. You're the only place that doesn't belong to it, and you'll never get the old scale back till you do."

"But how will joining the Knights help us?" asked one man. "We'll have to pay dues, won't we?"

"Of course we will."

"That settles it, mister. We hain't got but jist enough to keep the pot b'ilin', and no money to spend on dues."

Shaw bent his brows.

"Do any of you drink beer?"

"Ay, ay," quoth Maguire. "'Tis the only comfort we have now, and we won't give it up."

"Indeed! and how much does it cost you to get a good drunk and forget your troubles for a night?" asked Shaw, coolly.

The question seemed to surprise the men.

"Reckon I can drink fifty glasses without caving in," said one, boastfully.

"How much a glass?" asked Shaw, quickly.

"Five cents."

"Exactly. Well, that's nearly a year's dues, and it only lasts one night, don't it?"

"Ay, ay, I see what you're drivin' at," said Maguire, rather scornfully, "but we ain't goin' to give up our beer and turn temp'rin' folks."

"Suppose you tried it for three months, and got the old scale at the end of the time. Wouldn't that be a paying investment?" asked Shaw.

No one seemed to be able to find an answer, and he went on:

"I came here to let you men know what the Knights of Labor have done, and to start an assembly here. We're not anxious to have you join. The rest of us have got the old scale, and if you like to stick to the new one we don't want to hinder you."

"But we don't want to do no sich thing," said one of the men, in a tone of vexation. "We want the old scale, and we want to know how the Knights are going to help us get it."

"That's the way to talk," said Shaw. "Now we shall get on better, I think. I'll tell you all. The Order has assemblies in every town where there's an iron mill, except this. Any working-man's eligible to join, if he can pay his dues, and we don't have but very small expenses. We've got a big surplus fund, which we use on purpose

to sustain strikes, and the moment you join you become entitled to that fund, if a strike is ordered. What we want to do is to get in every man in the trade. The bosses have their Unions, and it's their business to save all the wages they can. We don't blame them. It's our business to get all we can, and they can't blame us. If we all stick together we can make them come down, but if any man or men give way, it makes the strike just so much the longer."

The men listened intently, and Maguire asked respectfully:

"And d'ye mane to say, sir, that av we j'ine the Order the men in the other places will help us to get better wages?"

"Of course I do. That's the object of the Order. But it will take time to bring you all in. You'll have to save money, and pay dues; for dues are what we want. Capital we must have. That's all that makes the difference between us and the bosses. They have saved wages and added to them. We spend our wages. When you have all the men of all the mills then it will be time to say to the bosses that you want the old scale. They can't get any men from other places, for the Order will forbid it. And if the Knights of Labor do that everywhere, the bosses will have to come down in a week."

His words seemed to set the men to thinking, for there was a short silence, till Maguire observed, hesitatingly:

"And what ye say's very true, sir, but how will we get into the Order at all?"

"That's what I came here to show you. Say the word how many want to join, and I can initiate you all to-night, if you like."

"To-night!" echoed one of the men with a start. "Not to-night. Give us a little time."

"And why not to-night?" asked Larry Locke, who spoke for the first time, and, as he said it, he walked into the middle of the circle, his short, sturdy figure looking more defiant than usual. "Why put it off a day? You gave in to the boss three months ago, and if you go back to work now, he'll find out what's been done here to-night, and discharge you all. Why shouldn't he? He's not afraid of you. For all we know, there's one of his spies here this very moment. I struck when you gave in, and I've been getting the old scale ever since out in Ohio. I've come back here because my people were here, and I've come to stay with you and to make Boss Skinner give you back the old wages. To-night's the time. I want to start the first Holesburg assembly. Who'll go in with me?"

"I will," said Maguire, drawing a deep breath and speaking with an effort.

"And I," "And I," said two other men.

"Very good," observed Shaw, quietly; "a small beginning's better than nothing. The Order began in two men, and now it has a million. I tell you, men, we've made a beginning and we'll bring the bosses to terms yet."

Then he turned to Larry.

"Have you a back room, a quiet one, where we shall be safe from interruption, and be able to do the initiation?"

Larry hesitated.

"Nothing but the garret. That's empty."

"That will do," said Shaw, promptly. "All these other men had better retire, unless they want to join. We take only true men."

"And what kind of a thing is this initiation?" asked another man, hesitatingly.

"You'll find out if you join, and you won't if you don't," said Shaw, sharply. "We want some room, gentlemen."

"But I want to join," said the man.

"And so do I," "And I," "And I," said three others.

Curiosity as to the secrets of a society had driven them in when principle was too weak, and in half an hour afterward Larry's little garret was crowded with candidates for the Order, and thirty-seven men were mustered in that night.

The light in the attic window attracted much attention from other cottages in the vicinity, and more than one neighbor called on Molly to inquire what was going on at that time of night, but got no satisfaction from her.

As the clock struck ten, a gentleman passing in a dog-cart returning from a late expedition passed before the light, and muttered to the companion beside him:

"What's he doing up at this time of night? Some mischief, I'll be bound, father."

The other person on the seat grunted.

"Let him do his utmost. If Van Slack's right, I can arrest him for conspiracy if he tries to make trouble."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NEW STRIKE.

THREE weeks later, Marcellus Skinner was in his office when he heard a knock at the door, and Mr. Van Slack, his lawyer, a weazened little man, came in.

Skinner turned on him eagerly and quickly, demanding:

"Well, what news?"

Mr. Van Slack rubbed his hands.

"Locke's time is up to-morrow, and he has served no notice of appearance. What shall I do if he doesn't come up?"

"Put him out; sell him up; drive him out of the place," cried Skinner, eagerly. "I'll make the scoundrel sup sorrow for it. I sha'n't be easy till he's driven to the poor-house. I don't see how he has dared to come back here. He is not at work anywhere that I know; but he struts about the street as if he was a lord."

Van Slack rubbed his hands again.

"By the by, I must tell you one thing. He has made an informal offer to me—"

"What was it?" asked Skinner, quickly.

"It seems he has saved three hundred dollars, and he wanted to pay that and give me a fresh mortgage, to run three years."

"And what did you say?" asked Skinner.

"I told him I must see you first. Seriously, I think it a good offer. The place is well worth three times what will remain—"

Marcellus interrupted him harshly:

"On no account. Do you suppose I want his paltry savings? No. I want to drive him out, to get his house, to get rid of him. I hate the scoundrel. He's plotting a strike with my men, and I'm bound to get rid of him."

Mr. Van Slack shrugged his shoulders.

"In that case it's no business of mine. I'll do what's necessary."

He went away, and Marcellus turned to his books again and began to look over his ledger, a book which had become his favorite reading of late, and mutter to himself as he read, on the flourishing state of affairs.

Tom Trainor had gone out as usual; for his father, hard as flint to all the rest of the world, was foolishly fond of Tom and indulged him in money without stint. There was no one in the office but the old bookkeeper and a boy, when a sharp rap came at the inner glass door, and Skinner wheeled round to confront a crowd of workmen headed by no less a person than the hated Larry Locke, who was neatly dressed and had his hat in his hand.

For one instant Marcellus Skinner felt a thrill of fear, and then he recovered his coolness to ask angrily:

"What does this mean? How dare you come in here, you, Locke? Haven't I forbid you this place, long ago?"

Larry Locke appeared not to have heard him, for he only answered:

"This is Mr. Skinner, I believe, head of these iron mills? We represent the Knights of Labor, and I'm Master Workman of this district."

"The blazes you are!" said Skinner, with a bitter sneer. "And what do you think I care for that?"

"Simply this," was the placid reply. "Our assembly counts all your hands in it, and—"

"Get out of here!" interrupted Skinner, harshly. "I don't want to know you or your precious assembly."

Larry smiled.

"You're impolite, sir; then you wish the men to stop work, do you?"

"I don't care who stops or goes on!" was the still more angry reply. "When my men come to me I'll talk to them. I've nothing to do with you."

"Is that your final reply?" asked Larry.

"My final reply is: Get out!"

And with that, Skinner went to the door and pointed to the outer yard.

Larry immediately put on his hat.

"Very good, Mr. Skinner," he said; "I'm not coming back to this office till you send for me. You understand that?"

Then he wheeled round to the men and said, in his quietest tones:

"Go home."

One of the men in the rear of the group blew a whistle, and instantly the noise of hammers ceased, the whirring of the machinery bands slackened to silence, and the sounds of scuffling feet, with the buzz of conversation, announced that the men had left their tasks and were streaming out to go home, as if it were sunset.

The group of men with Larry turned to the shop to get their clothes, and Larry himself, with a placid smile on his face, walked past Skinner, looking him in the eye, and thence into the street, just as the men began to stream out.

As for Marcellus, for some moments he was too much taken aback to say or do a thing; and then he rushed into the shop toward the gate and tried to bar the way of the stream of men coming out.

"Where are you going?" he shouted. "Go back to your work, you scoundrels! I'll discharge every one of you."

He had been used, during the last three months, to have them cringing before him, and expected to drive them back by sheer bullying, but he found his mistake.

Not one of the men looked at him in the face; but all pretended to be deeply interested in something out in the street, while all kept pressing on in grim silence, as long as they were near him, though outside of that circle, a loud buzz of conversation went on, and he heard some laughing:

Stung to the quick at the evasions, he tried to single out an individual, and finally grabbed a small man by the throat, crying:

"Where are you going?"

The man made no answer, but tried to get out of his grasp, while Skinner shook him and screamed excitedly:

"Confound your insolence, why don't you give me a civil answer? Where are you—"

The word was cut short in his mouth by the end of a coat which was slashed in his face and eyes from behind, and as he let go the little man instinctively, to turn on his assailant, half-blinded, the workmen set on him with their coats slashing him from all sides, with an unanimity and heartiness that prevented him from seeing who was assaulting him, for every blow came from behind, and took him over the eyes and mouth, till he roared aloud and crouched down, hiding his head in his arms.

Then some one gave him a kick from behind, which sent him on his knees, and a moment later he was thrown on his face and a crowd of men deliberately sat down on him, while the shuffling of feet past him went on as before, and every one seemed to be laughing at him.

All his struggles were in vain; for nearly a ton weight lay on him, pinning him to the ground; and presently he began to groan, when a voice above him said sternly:

"Will ye lay still and not luke, av we let ye up, ye old spalpeen?"

"Yes, yes," grunted Skinner, as well as he could speak, and with that they rose up; but two men kept their feet on his shoulders as the crowd passed him, and he lay on his face, not daring to look up, till the pressure was removed.

When he did look at last, the tail end of the crowd was going out through the gate and he could not recognize any one.

His "crushers" had disappeared in the crowd, and he could not have traced them, even had he wished so to do.

But that was very far from his thoughts.

Marcellus Skinner in his office, cowering his men by the force of money and resolution, had hardly realized what a power there is in numbers when the numbers become united.

He had been cast down and trampled on till he felt limp as a rag and weak as a kitten.

He knew well enough that only the forbearance of the men had saved his life, for he had put himself in their power by his rashness and over-confidence.

A very much humiliated Marcellus it was who came into the office and sat down gloomily to think over matters.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOCKING OUT.

He had not sat there very long when he heard the rattle of wheels outside and saw his son, Tom Trainor, dash into the mill-yard in his dog-cart, pull up, all in a hurry, and rush to the door which he flung open and entered the office in a much demoralized condition.

Tom had taken to gorgeous attire of late, and rejoiced much in diamond studs, sleeve-buttons and rings, which he was accustomed to flash in the eyes of all beholders to excite envy.

He delighted in valet cutaways, pearl-gray trousers, patent-leather boots, yellow dogskin gloves and gorgeous neckties, with the shiniest of hats, and such had been his array when he started out, but now it was sadly changed for the worse.

His shiny hat was broken in and his velvet coat bespattered with mud, while some one had apparently smashed a watermelon on his back, for the pink juice and flesh were all over his coat, while a big lump of mud had taken him on one cheek and stuck there.

He came in, pale and breathless, stammering: "What's the matter? What has happened, father? I don't know—"

"What have they done to you?" asked old Skinner, gloomily.

"I was driving up the street," answered Tom, confusedly, "and I met 'em all coming out. And all I asked them was what was the matter, when they began."

"And what did they do?" asked Skinner.

"They hooted and jeered at me and one of them, Steve Rankin, called me a cursed lazy upstart pauper, and I got mad and cut him with my whip, and then they went for me. Lucky I drove fast, for I do believe they'd have killed me. What is it? Have they gone on strike?"

"Yes," answered Marcellus, grinding his teeth, "that cursed Larry Locke has set them at it. He was in here, and said that he came to represent the Knights of Labor. I don't believe it."

"But he was out there," said Tom, and he turned paler than before, if possible. "I heard him call to them to let me alone. He seems to be a sort of leader."

"Is he?" retorted his father. "I'll give him all the leadership he wants, curse him! I'll have his house to-morrow, if he don't pay me every cent he owes. He had the impudence to tell me that I should have to send for him before he came back here."

Tom seemed unusually nervous, for he fidgeted about for some time, and at last said, in an uneasy sort of way:

"I say, father, you don't want to press him too close."

"Ha! Why not?" asked Marcellus.

"Well, you see, I got into a little trouble with his wife," said Tom, in a low tone. "I thought he had gone away for good; but he came back just in time to catch me and her havin' a little difficulty, and I'm afraid of my life ever since. He's a deep one, and I don't never know when he won't get hold of me and kill me."

His father seemed to be startled and alarmed at the news, for he questioned Tom closely on his trouble, and when the young man had told him the story, Marcellus observed:

"That's so, Tom. He's a bad man; but I'll get him laid by the neck yet. Wait till tomorrow, and we'll have him where we want him. Let's shut the gates now. These fellows want the old scale back, and I'm not going to give it to them. Let them sweat a week, and they'll be glad enough to come back on any terms."

So they set to work and closed the great gate of the mill after they had set in order what they could, and father and son got into the dog-cart and drove away, after Tom had washed off what he could of the stains of his recent encounter.

As for the smart English groom, he had utterly vanished from the scene as soon as the pelting began on Tom, and came sneaking into the yard just as they were preparing to drive out, protesting that:

"He hadn't engaged for no sich work, and he wanted to leave his place right off, as the Yankees call it."

Old Skinner paid and dismissed him on the spot, feeling rather bitterly as if every one had deserted them; for the only member of the establishment who had remained at his place was the old book-keeper, but he drove away with Tom; and as they passed through the streets of Holesburg, noticed that all the men of all the mills seemed to be out lounging about, as if on strike.

He took his way first to the great iron foundry of Stone and Grynde, and saw the gates shut, while Mr. Grynde, junior member of the firm, stood with his hands in his pockets, looking gloomy and thoughtful as he surveyed the silent and empty building.

"Well, Grynde," he said, "what's the news?"

Grynde looked up at him ruefully.

"The Knights have got us in a hole, Mr. Skinner. We ought to have known what was going on."

"What has been going on?" asked Skinner, in rather a scornful tone.

"They've been getting up lodges of the blasted Knights of Labor right under our noses," said Grynde, gloomily, "and we haven't seen what was coming. You don't know what a power they are. And we can't afford to let our fire go out. It costs like the deuce to start it."

"Why, you're not meaning to give up before a week, at least?" said Skinner, incredulously. "Why, man, we can beat them! Not one of them has a penny saved, and two weeks will bring them to terms, sure."

Grynde shook his head.

"You don't know what it is when the Knights get at it in earnest. They've a big following, and we won't be able to get a man to work for us, I'm afraid."

Skinner frowned angrily.

"That's all very well; but I can tell you one thing: I'm not going to give in, not if I have to get Chinamen to do the work. Who came to you at the head of your men, and what did he want?"

"It was a man who used to be in your mill, I believe: one Larry Locke; and he's Master Workman of the district now. He has been round to all the rest, and warned them all."

"But you don't mean to say you recognized his right to speak for your men?"

"I had to, and so did the rest. We've asked for time, but he wouldn't give us an hour. The men just dropped tools and left the place, as soon as he raised his hand."

Marcellus Skinner ground his teeth.

"Curse his impudence!" he muttered.

CHAPTER XXIV SOMETHING IN IT.

THE eventful day had come, when Larry Locke must either answer the summons on the bond and mortgage affecting his house, or lose the same.

Mr. Marcellus Skinner, gnawing his under lip with anxiety, sat in the office of his lawyer, Mr. Van Slack, watching the clock as the hour of noon approached, and frequently went to the window to look down the street.

As the hands pointed to five minutes, he began to rub his own hands and said to Van Slack in a tone of delight:

"Time's nearly up; isn't it? Have you the papers all ready?"

Mr. Van Slack looked at his rich client in the most respectful fashion.

"Everything is ready, Mr. Skinner. We can put in the execution this afternoon."

"Do so, do so," answered Skinner, setting his teeth viciously. "You don't know how much there is depending on it. If I can only drive

that fellow away, I'm all right. Only three and a half minutes left. He won't be here. You may as well get out the papers and we'll go over and see the sheriff at once."

The words were not out of his mouth when the office door opened, and his own nephew, Paul Van Beaver, walked into the office, touched his hat to Van Slack, and said:

"Good-day. Here's a notice for you. We appear for Locke in that mortgage suit. We want a copy of the complaint."

He glanced at the clock, and gave Van Slack an open paper, which caused the old lawyer to wrinkle up his face in a grin, as he said to Skinner, rather maliciously:

"That judgment will have to wait awhile, Mr. Skinner. Here's a regular notice, and it gives them twenty days more."

Skinner turned fairly purple with rage, and scowled at Paul under his brows in a malignant, sidelong fashion, as he said:

"Hum! That's what I call pretty mean practice against a relative. This young man is not a lawyer, is he?"

Paul paid no attention to his uncle, but said to Van Slack, quietly:

"Will you sign the admission of service?"

Van Slack glanced at his malignant client, and answered hastily:

"Can't do it. Very sorry, tell Mr. Scriven; but he knows the reason."

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"All right. Good-day, sir."

Then he went out, and Skinner broke forth:

"The ungrateful young hound! Who is he with, Van Slack? How dare he come here?"

"He is with your old friend, Scriven," replied Van Slack, dryly. "I suppose he wants to get even with you, for taking away your business from him. He's a wary old bird, and if he has taken up the case, he thinks there's something in it, I suppose."

"But there's nothing in it," protested Skinner. "He owed the money to old Briggs, and I paid hard cash for the debt."

Van Slack shrugged his shoulders.

"We shall see, I suppose. All in good time. But meanwhile you can't put Locke out of his house for another three weeks certainly, and if they choose to fight it off, they can do so for six months or more; perhaps a year."

Marcellus Skinner rose from his seat and swore venomously for several minutes. Then, having eased his mind somewhat, he took his departure and went straight to Mr. Scriven's office.

The old lady had done his business from the time of his father's death, and it was only in this matter of Larry Locke that Skinner had sought another adviser, from a suspicion that Scriven might be too tender-hearted to do all that he wished in the matter.

Skinner walked in, and found his nephew seated at a desk, writing away in the outer office, while the old lawyer was in the inside room, working at a pile of books. Skinner, with the assurance of a rich client, was walking inside, when Paul rose from his desk, put himself in the way, and said firmly:

"Mr. Scriven is busy, and has given orders that he is not to be disturbed."

"Get out of my way," said his uncle, loftily.

"I don't wait outside with understrappers."

And he was about to push Paul, when old Scriven looked up from his books and said:

"Let the gentleman in, Mr. Van Beaver. It's not worth while to have a scene."

Skinner passed in with a triumphant sneer at Paul, and the old lawyer glanced up at him over his spectacles without so much as a nod, observing frigidly:

"Well, sir, what do you want?"

"I want to know what you mean by taking up the cause of this swindling ruffian, Locke, against me, when you know well enough he owes me the money?" asked Marcellus, hotly.

"It's an infamous conspiracy, sir, and you ought to be ashamed to engage in it."

Mr. Scriven's usually yellow face turned orange with a flush of anger as he answered:

"Mr. Skinner, be kind enough to get out of this office. I'm not used to hearing this sort of language. Get out, sir; quick!"

As he spoke he rose up, a thin, delicate-looking old man of sedentary habits, and pointed threateningly to the door, saying:

"I don't want to use violence; but you'll apologize, or out you go."

"Apologize! To you!" echoed Marcellus, aghast. "You? Why, curse your impudence, I'll shake the life out of you!"

And he was actually rushing in to do it, confident in his superior strength, when he was suddenly seized from behind by a pair of strong young arms, felt a knee dug into his back, and was flung no the floor so dexterously that he had no time to do more than utter an amazed grunt of pain, when Paul Van Beaver said sternly:

"Now look out what you're doing, Uncle Marcellus. I've taken lessons, and I'll put a head on you, if you try to strike my partner, Mr. Scriven."

Marcellus got up slowly, considerably shaken and with some sense knocked into him. He had found a considerable change in Paul's mus-

cles from the time when he grappled with him, six years before.

It was the difference between eighteen and twenty-four, while in his own case the six years had stiffened and weakened him, as between forty-six and fifty-two.

But Paul's last words caused him the most surprise, for he ejaculated slowly:

"Partner? Scriven ain't your partner."

"Yes, I am," said the old lawyer himself, "and now, since you've had your lesson, get out of this office."

"But I wanted to speak to you," said Marcellus, with infinitely more civility. "I didn't mean to quarrel with any one, but I was riled. There, confound it, I apologize."

"That alters the case," returned Scriven, coldly. "Sit down. Now tell me what you want?"

"I want you to stop defending this suit," said Skinner, crossly. "It's an infamous shame, it's only done to gain time and keep me out of my money, so you won't help the man in the end. He'll have to pay it. He has no sort of defense, and you know it."

"How do you know he has no defense?" asked Paul Van Beaver, suddenly.

Marcellus turned round and looked at his nephew as if he would like to have given him a dose of poison; but said nothing beyond:

"I was not speaking to you, sir."

Old Scriven's yellow face wrinkled up into a curious sort of grin as he observed:

"Very well, then. I'll answer with another question. What made you give the business to Van Slack when I've done all the law business of the mill for twenty years?"

Skinner colored slightly.

"Because—well—because it was a little thing and I didn't—"

"Yes, you didn't want me to know you were going to bring the suit against a poor man who only asked time. That was why you went to Van. Well, you were wrong. If you had thought a moment you would have remembered that as old Briggs's lawyer as well as yours, I knew all about that mortgage. Now I've taken it up for him at the request of my friend and partner here, Mr. Van Beaver, and hereafter the sooner you take away the rest of your business, the better I shall like it, Mr. Skinner. As for Locke's case, I can tell you at once that the man has a defense and a good one, as you'll find out when the case comes to trial. Now good-day, sir. You must excuse further talk, but I'm busy. Mr. Van Beaver, please show Mr. Skinner out."

And the old lawyer turned to his books, as if no one had been in the room, while Skinner, considerably put down, not to say flabbergasted by his sudden change of manner, walked quietly out of the office, followed by Paul Van Beaver, who took his hat from the desk and followed his uncle into the passage.

When he got outside, moreover, he laid his hand on Marcellus's arm, and said quietly:

"Uncle Marcellus, I don't see why we should be bitter enemies so long. My mother was your sister. I'm willing to shake hands if you are."

Marcellus glanced at him sideways.

"I've no doubt you are," he said, "but I'm not. You've joined my enemies, and you're trying to help my men in this strike. Very well. You can do so; but my turn's coming, and you'll never get a chance at my money. Shake hands with you? Not if you lay dying, curse you!"

And he turned his back and walked away to his buggy. As he got into it, he was not surprised to see Larry Locke on the street coming toward the lawyer's office, but he was surprised to see on his arm old Briggs, the very man to whom Larry had owed the mortgage, and that Larry was piloting him along to Scriven's office.

He watched the two going up-stairs, and then drove round to Van Slack's, to whom he told what he had seen, and was surprised to hear Van Slack say:

"I thought so. There's something behind all this. Old Briggs was with him, was he? I'll bet there's some sharp practice going on. If there is, I'll have a hand in it. Snapper and Van Slack are hard to beat, and Scriven and Van Beaver will find that out some day."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BOSSES' MEETING.

THE strike had lasted a week, and Holesburg was full of idle men, when Marcellus Skinner received a note from Stone & Grynde, saying:

"DEAR SIR:—

"You are requested to come to a meeting of manufacturers on Tuesday morning at eleven o'clock, at the office of Messrs. Kelly and Barr, to meet the committee of the Knights of Labor and arrange on a compromise to end the strike."

"Yours respectfully,

"PURFACE GRYNDE,

"Secretary Manufacturers' Union."

Skinner twisted up the note and his face at the same time, muttering:

"They're going to give in. I know it. But they sha'n't do it, if I have any say in it."

He sat down and scribbled an answer.

"I'll be there, but I shall vote against any sort of a compromise."

"M. SKINNER."

On Tuesday morning, accordingly, he went to the great rolling-mill of Kelly & Barr, now grimly silent, like all the mills in Holesburg, and found, collected in the large counting-room, nearly a dozen leading men of the iron trade, generally large and fat, with grim, hard faces and close-set jaws.

They were all well-dressed, and most of them had diamond solitaires in their shirt-fronts, while all wore immense watch-chains, with bundles of seals and charms dependent.

They greeted Skinner cordially, as one of their own kind, and very soon dashed into the subject of the strike and how to end it.

Mr. Kelly, of the firm of Kelly & Barr, began at Skinner:

"Well, what do you think of the situation?"

"I think," said Skinner, in his hard voice, "that it couldn't be better for us. Every day makes them poorer, and they can't afford to be idle."

"But then suppose a man's got a contract, and he can't get hands to do it with," interjected Mr. Grynde, nervously. "What's he to do? I've got a contract, with a big penalty attached, and if I don't get to work at it, I must go under."

Skinner looked at him with some contempt.

"Why, you was the first man wanted to move that reduction on the men, and now you want to give in, jest because your corns are bein' trod on."

"But what am I to do?" urged Grynde. "I can't go into bankruptcy because of a strike. I'll have to give in. I must get my hands to work again."

Kelly and the others listened to him in the hard, indifferent way rich men are apt to use when misfortune comes to their notice, but Skinner growled out:

"I don't see no necessity. You can stick to us, and we'll stick to you."

Old Kelly turned to him in a more comforting strain, to say:

"You know, if we make a society, we're all bound to abide by it. If you was to weaken now, it would give the whole strike a big boost, just as it's going down."

"Look a-here, gentlemen," put in Skinner, "I want to tell you what I've seen this last week, and you kin tell best who's likely to win. I seen the pawn-shops, for I've watched 'em close, and there's a string of men and women there, half a block long, all the day. That shows how they're suffering. It won't be long before they'll run through all they've got and come to starving. We kin stand it longer'n they kin. Suppose we keep shut up a month or a year. There ain't one of us has got to go to the pawn-shop to live. We've got plenty to live on. It's only that westopmaking money so fast. And I tell ye what it is. If we kin make the men see that, there won't be no more strikes, I'll bet."

"Well, gentlemen," said Grynde, nervously, "we're wasting time, talking like this. We came here to meet a committee of the Knights of Labor; and the time's nearly come. I move Mr. Kelly take the chair."

And no objection being heard, the oleaginous Kelly sunk into his chair at the head of the table, and the magnates of the trade began to look as dignified as they could, while they awaited the arrival of the deputation.

Skinner thought he would do a little talking, for he very soon got up and said:

"Now, Mr. Chairman, this, as I understand it, is a meeting of iron manufacturers, called by Mr. Grynde as secretary. What I want to know is, who are these fellows that are coming to see us to-day?"

"A committee of the Knights of Labor," answered Grynde instantly.

"And who the deuce are they? I don't know them, we don't know them. If my men come to me to strike, I'll listen to 'em, but I don't know no Knights of Labor. When they come to me, I just wouldn't listen to 'em and bounced their Master Workman as he deserved. Now what I advise is this here, that we do the same now, and tell these fellers when they come that we don't want to treat with them, and don't recognize 'em at all as any one."

The advice seemed to be rather relished by several of the manufacturers, and Skinner proceeded:

"Now they're coming up. What are we going to say to them?"

"We're going to hear them," said Grynde, "and see if we cant split the difference."

"Then I move we don't hear 'em at all," said Skinner, "but tell 'em we won't have nothing to do with 'em. Who dares second that?"

"I do, just for fun," observed Mr. Barr, another magnate. "Put the motion, Kelly."

The chairman was about to put the motion, when Mr. Grynde cried out:

"But consider, gentlemen, consider, if you do this you're driving me out of the Union and I must get through with my contract."

"Oh, blast your contract," put in Barr. "It's pull devil, pull baker with us in a strike, and you ought to know that. If you want to give in, you know the penalty. You leave the

Union, and we buy and sell no more with you. Put the motion, Kelly."

Mr. Grynde turned pale as he looked round the table. A hard man himself, like all rich men who have made their money, he, for the first time, found himself in a position when he had to ask a favor of his friends, and it was in a pleading tone he said:

"Gentlemen, as a favor to me, don't put this motion at once. I tell you, if you compel me to keep my mill closed, I must go into bankruptcy. They've got me. Don't make a Union matter of it. Leave us all free to do as we please about it. I don't want to leave the Union—"

"Nuther do I," said Skinner, breaking in; "but I'm a-goin' to do it, darned sudden, too, if there's any talk of givin' in. Give in to these skunks and have 'em ride over ye all the rest of yer lives? No, sirr! If our side gives in on this strike, I goes out of the Union and the trade, too. Curse 'em both, say I."

"Put the motion, Mr. Chairman," said Barr at this juncture, as if he feared the hot temper of Skinner.

And the motion was put and triumphantly carried, the very moment before a knock came at the door, and one of the board or Union cried out:

"Come in!"

The door opened, and into the room walked Larry Locke, followed by a dozen or so of men, all with their hats in their hands.

They were greeted by a dead silence, till Larry observed, in an indifferent sort of way:

"Well, gentlemen, ye sent for us. What d'ye want with us?"

"Who are you?" asked Mr. Kelly, in a deep, resonant tone of voice, as if he had seen Larry for the first time.

Larry looked at him keenly for a moment, and then glanced round the board. Every man was sitting back in his chair, twiddling his watch-chain and looking at the ceiling.

"Oho," said the workman, quietly. "Is that the way you're going, gentlemen?"

With that he put on his hat instantly, an example imitated by his followers.

"I'm Larry Locke, Master Workman of this district of the Knights of Labor," he said, "and I have come here to demand in the name of the Order that you restore the old scale of prices in Holesburg, the same as they've done in other towns. That's who I am and what I want."

"Very well," returned Kelly, in his most solemn tones, "you can go as you came. This Union doesn't recognize you and refuses to treat with you. Is that all you want?"

Larry looked him in the eye, not a little surprised. He had expected, from the summons, that the manufacturers were weakening; and here he received a direct snub from them, in a way that showed there was no such thing in the wind.

He knew that the men, so long on strike, were getting desperate, and that, when he brought the news to them that their committee had only been sent for to be insulted, there would be trouble in the streets.

But he put the best face he could on it, and replied, firmly:

"No, that's not all we want."

"What else do you want?" asked Kelly.

"Civil treatment," replied Larry, shortly; "and mark my words, you, sir, Mr. Kelly, it's not because you're chairman of this meeting you can treat us with insolence. You sent for us, and now you refuse to treat with us. What does this mean?"

"It means that we'll treat with our own hands when they come to us, but not with a stranger from God knows where. We don't know you and won't recognize you. With our own men we will treat, not you."

Larry Locke heard him and quivered as he listened, for he knew what the insolent mill-owner intended. He was trying to breed disaffection between Larry and his friends.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RIOT.

THE workmen looked at Larry, evidently not a little put out, and one of them cried out, fiercely:

"It's a put-up job. We had a letter from your secretary, Mr. Grynde, asking us here to see if we couldn't compromise. If we go back, and tell the boys you won't meet us, there'll be trouble in the town."

"Trouble be hanged!" said Skinner, fiercely. "You make trouble, and see what will come to you. We ain't going to treat with you till you come back and work as you were working before this Larry Locke came to fool you all. What's he done for ye, with his Knights of Labor? Will that give ye bread to eat?"

"Ay," broke in Larry, "and you'll see it, too, Mr. Skinner. It's your turn to-day. Next time it will be ours. Good-day to ye all."

And he stalked out of the room, looking pale and angry, while the men looked as if they were disappointed and maddened to the last degree.

A short silence followed, and then Mr. Grynde got up, and said, hurriedly:

"Mr. President, I don't believe in this way of doing business. I offer my resignation."

"Move we accept it at once," said Barr; and Skinner rapped out:

"Second the motion. We want to know just where we stand. I ain't doin' any milksop business myself."

And so the motion was put and carried, and Mr. Grynde walked out of the room, very pale, and seeming to be much ashamed of himself.

Soon after he was gone, they heard a great groaning in the street below, and Barr went to the window and looked out, to report a moment later:

"The street's full of them, and they're telling old Grynde what they think of us. That Larry Locke's trying to speak."

They all left their seats to crowd to the windows, and look down.

The street was full of a surging mass of people, mostly men in their shirt sleeves, and they were hooting and groaning at Larry Locke and Mr. Grynde, who stood side by side on a big horse-block.

Presently they heard Larry shout, in a pause of the groaning:

"Let the man speak. He's going to give in."

The words produced an instant hush, and men pressed close to the horse-block to listen to what was coming.

Then Grynde lifted up his voice to shout:

"My mill opens—to-morrow—at the old scale—I've left the Union—I'll take—all—the old hands."

There was a tremendous burst of cheering, and when it was over a man yelled:

"Three cheers for Grynde! The strike's over! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The cheering was caught up, and in the midst of it Grynde and Larry disappeared in the crowd, which surged to and fro with a great buzzing and noise, till a voice in the assembly roared:

"Three groans for the other bosses! Break the windows on 'em."

The cry spread like wildfire, and the men began to howl and yell at the windows where the manufacturers were assembled, so that they hastily retired, none too soon.

A moment later stones began to fly, and the crashing of glass told that damage was being done, for the excited strikers had found a way to vent their anger at last.

"We'd better get out of this," cried Mr. Kelly, hastily. "They'll do us a mischief if we don't look out. There's a back door leads into a little street behind the mill."

And he set the example by running off downstairs as hard as he could, while they could hear the tramp of feet in the mill, with the sound of voices in great excitement yelling out threats against the bosses as they ran.

They went for a little back stairway by which the hands were wont to be dismissed, and got out before they were discovered; but no sooner were they in the lane than they heard a great din in the shop they had left, and Kelly exclaimed:

"They're breaking up the plant. My God, I shall be ruined."

"Not a bit of it," answered Skinner. "I wish they'd do it to mine. Don't you know the county's liable for the damage? Let them smash all they can. I'm going for the soldiers."

"Ay, ay," panted old Barr, who was winded by his long run. "Let's telegraph the governor for help at once. There's a regular riot."

They scattered to find their carriages, which had driven away as soon as the crowd began to stream in, and found them in most cases damaged, wherever they had been recognized as belonging to the magnates of the mills.

As for Skinner, he had walked down, and he walked back by the way of side-streets, till he came to his own house, where he proceeded to put on some old, plain clothes, with a revolver in a belt round his waist, after which he sallied out into the street to see what was to be seen, confident that he would not be recognized by the strikers.

When he got into the principal street of Holesburg, he found everything, to all seeming, peaceful and quiet; people pursuing their ordinary avocations, but the strikers, who had been lounging about everywhere in the morning, seemed to have vanished from the business streets entirely.

Yet he very soon began to hear all sorts of rumors in the busy scene, as men met together in little knots, and at last he heard one person say:

"Yes, it's true. I saw the message after the operator had sent it."

"And what was it?" asked his friend.

"It was to the governor asking for troops to defend life and property. They say that Kelly and Barr's place was gutted, and that the men are threatening to burn all the mills in revenge for the bosses holding out so long."

"That would be nonsense," replied his friend. "What good would it do them to burn the mills? They'd get no work out of that."

"That's very true, but men don't think of that when they're in a passion. They've got a man

to lead them, a fellow called Locke. He's what they call Master Workman of this district. They do whatever he tells them."

Skinner pricked up his ears to listen, for he had an idea in his head.

"They say that he tries to keep them from doing violence, all he can," pursued the first speaker, "but he can't keep them back when once they're started. I hope they won't have any more trouble like we had in the big riots."

"Heaven forbid!" said his neighbor, devoutly, and then they passed on, while Skinner pursued his way through more side streets to the part of the town where the factories were, and took his way specially to the mill owned by Kelly & Barr, which he expected to find in ashes at the least.

To his surprise it stood there intact, and the gates were wide open, the street in front of it nearly deserted, though the quantity of broken glass that lay beneath the walls showed what had been done in the first heat of the mob's passion.

Assuming as much of an air of indifference as he could, he went forward to the gate and started to enter the works, when he was confronted by half a dozen resolute-looking fellows, carrying large clubs, saying:

"You can't come in here!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NEW PLAN.

THEY were evidently workmen, but they acted as if they had been put on guard, and he very naturally asked:

"Who are you and what are you doing here? Don't you know me?"

"No, I don't, and don't want to," returned one of the men. "We're put here to take care of the mill till the owner comes back, and we don't want this strike to be disgraced. We ain't robbers. We're only honest workingmen, and Master Workman Locke gives his orders from the Knights."

"Is he here?" asked Skinner.

"No, he ain't, and he don't need to be. You git out of this."

And with that the disgusted mill-owner had to move off, wondering greatly at the order and decency of these men, whom he and his friends were accustomed to treat as nothing but paupers, to be ruled by the fore of cruelty.

He passed along the streets where they were accustomed to congregate, and found them lounging about in the gloomy, purposeless way of men accustomed to labor and obliged to be idle.

The pawn-shops were crowded with them, and lines stretched out into the streets, with articles of clothing and household utensils in hand, on which they hoped to obtain money to live awhile.

Putting on the coarse language of a workman, Skinner asked one of them:

"Well, mate, how long d'ye think before the bosses give in?"

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"Dunno. Grynde's done it; but he ain't but a drop in a bucket. He only takes three hundred hands, and there's nigh six thousand out of work now."

"Then why don't the rest think of coming back on the old terms?" asked Skinner, incautiously, for the gloomy countenance of the man gave him courage.

The man instantly wheeled round to stare at him savagely.

"Who are you?" he asked. "A scab, come to take the bosses' part? D'ye think we've had such a time starving and working on the new scale that we want to go back to it again? Not by a darned sight! It's a tough thing to starve without work, but it's a tougher one to work all day and find your children starving at night. You get out of this, or some of us will be coming out on ye."

And every one began to scowl at Skinner in such a way that he slunk off, not caring to make further investigations, and went back to his own house, where he found Tom Trainor just come in from a drive in the country.

Tom had not troubled himself much about the strike after his first experience with the men. He gave the manufacturing portions of the town a wide berth, and tried to enjoy life as he knew best, which consisted in spending money on everything which took his fancy.

"Well, father," he said, as Skinner came in, "I was jest down to Van Slack's, and he says how Larry Locke's sent his answer in, and it's no good."

"Sent it in already?" said Skinner, incredulously. "Why, he's got twenty days to do it in. He don't want to shorten the time."

"But he's done it, so Van Slack says," was Tom's reply. "He hailed me as I passed the office, and told me to tell you."

"I'll go down to the office at once, Tom," said his parent, eagerly. "Maybe it wants attending to at once."

And within ten minutes he was at Van Slack's office, deeply absorbed in reading Larry's answer to his complaint, which filled him with surprise.

Larry not only was not fighting for time, but it appeared that he had a good defense, for he pleaded *usury*.

He asserted that the loan made to him by Peter Briggs had been made at a rate of interest not allowed by law, and that under the statutes of usury the debt was forfeited entirely. Therefore he claimed a judgment with costs.

Skinner read it and ground his teeth. He had grown to entertain a venomous hatred of Larry, and here it seemed as if the man was likely to slip through his fingers.

"Is that a good defense?" asked he.

Van Slack looked as wise as an owl.

"If he can prove it it is," he answered.

"But how can he prove it?"

"By Peter Briggs's receipts, I suppose."

"But suppose Peter denies them?"

The lawyer rubbed his hands.

"If we could get him to do that, to make an affidavit, for instance—"

"Yes. What then?"

"Why, then we could spike old Scriven's guns at once."

"I'll make him do it," said Skinner, in a resolute tone. "I don't care for the money, if I can only get this fellow out of the town. I'll spend ten times the amount, if necessary, to do that."

Van Slack looked at him in a queer way.

"Can I speak plainly, Mr. Skinner?"

"Certainly you can."

"You want to get this fellow out of town to stop the strike?"

"Exactly."

"Well, did it never occur to you that—"

He stopped and hesitated.

"Well, what, what?"

"That it might be cheaper to buy him off than to fight him?"

"Never. Confound him! I hate to buy him off. He'd use the money to help the strike."

"But suppose it was done through me?"

"I don't know what you mean."

The lawyer rose and closed the door, after a peep into the outer office. Then he came back and said mysteriously:

"If I were you, I'd buy him off."

"But why, why?" asked Skinner in a tone of irritation.

"Because he's a dangerous man, and old Scriven's no fool! You see, here you are in the midst of a great strike, with several irons on the fire. You say this man's the head of the strikers, and if they beat—"

"They won't beat."

"Perhaps not; but I've heard that one of your manufacturers has given in to them to-day—"

"Yes, Grynde. Confound his meanness."

"Exactly, and when he opens up, it will be a great temptation to the others. They'll see him making money, and it's ten to one some other man weakens—"

"Let 'em weaken. I won't."

"Probably not. But what are you going to do if they give in?"

"Shut up the mill and sell out."

Van Slack pursed up his lips.

"I guess you've forgotten part of the clause in your father's will under which you inherit the works."

Skinner started.

"What do you mean? You had nothing to do with that will."

"No. Scriven did that, and I must say it was quite an artful clause he drew. I'm inclined to think the old fellow had a suspicion of you."

Skinner began to get nervous.

"But what do you know about it? You never saw it."

"The original? No. But you forget it's recorded, and that the records are open to all the world. Here's a copy of the clause I mean. It's significant."

He read out to his client from a sheet of paper on which was written as follows:

"And at any time when the said business of making Bessemer steel shall become unprofitable, it shall be the duty of the said Marcellus Skinner, executor as aforesaid, to sell the buildings, lands, plant, stock in trade and appurtenances thereof, at public auction to the highest bidder, after three months' notice in the public prints and by hand-bills and posters—"

"Exactly," interrupted Skinner. "That gives me liberty to do what I please."

"Hold on," said the lawyer. "That's not all. Hear the rest:

"For such sum or sums as may be deemed satisfactory by him and the next heir, and to divide the said sum or sums equally in two parts, one of which shall be invested in United States bonds for the benefit of the next heir, the other for said executor; and no such sale shall be valid without the conjunction in said sale of said next heir."

He folded up the paper and continued:

"What do you think of that? You know what it means?"

Skinner set his teeth close.

"Yes, I know what it means. But what does it amount to?"

"It means that you can't sell the mill without the consent of the next heir, your nephew, Paul Van Beaver, who must join you in the deeds."

"But suppose I sell anyhow, without letting

him know anything about it? Who is to hinder me? I'm sole executor, and there's no penalty in the will."

Van Slack smiled.

"My dear Mr. Skinner, you remember who drew that will?"

"Yes, Scriven."

"And you know who is in his office now, as his partner?"

Skinner scowled.

"Ay, ay, I know. Paul Van Beaver, curse him!"

"Exactly. Well, do you know that it seems to me if you don't terminate this strike pretty soon, you're going to be in a bad box for money?"

Skinner moved uneasily on his chair. He had begun to think the same himself, but his obstinacy refused to admit it.

"Well, what of that?" he said sulkily. "I can raise money on it, by mortgage, and get the whole place swamped, so it will be no use to him even if I die before him."

"Yes, that's all very well," said Van Slack; "but as your lawyer, I'm bound to give you good advice. You can do all you've said and ruin a fine property, but there's another way you can do better."

"And what's that?" asked Skinner sourly.

"Well, tell me how much has this strike cost you this two weeks?" retorted Van Slack in the same tone.

Skinner cursed under his breath.

"Darned near twenty thousand dollars."

"Exactly. Then it's worth ten to you to end the strike, isn't it?"

"Perhaps it might," Skinner assented.

"Very well, sir. I'll get rid of this Larry Locke for twenty-five hundred down; and engage to make him leave the city," said Van Slack quietly. "He's the soul of the strike, isn't he?"

"I believe he is," said Skinner soberly.

"Very well. Leave him to me. Before the week's up I'll have him out of here, if you will furnish the money. Molasses is the stuff to catch flies. He'll fight as long as you fight, but I don't know human nature if he don't come down to a bribe. Shall I try it?"

Skinner drew a deep breath.

"Try it," he said, "but keep my name out."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PAUL'S NEWS.

LARRY LOCKE had gone to his own home the second week of the strike, and was sitting thoughtfully at the door of his cottage in the evening, when Molly came up beside him, saying coaxingly:

"What makes ye so still, Larry boy?"

"I'm thinking," he replied, absently.

"Thinking of what? I'm sure I'm too happy to have you back to think of anything but how you're home," she answered, fondly.

"Ay, ay, Molly, that's a woman's way to look at it," said Larry, slowly; "but you don't know what it is to have all the responsibility on one pair of shoulders."

"What responsibility?"

"The strike, dear. These men are at me all the time to do something to make the bosses yield to them."

"And why don't ye, Larry boy?" she asked, with sublime faith that he could do any act to which he made up his mind.

Larry shook his head impatiently.

"How can I influence the bosses? We've got to hold out till they give in; that's all there is about it. But if the other side think a few of us are giving way, they'll stick it out and beat us, sure."

"But I thought the Union was giving the men money to live on," said Molly.

"So it is, and if they were content to live on it and spend as little as possible, they would have a better chance; but somehow—"

"Somehow what, Larry?" she asked, seeing that he had stopped.

"Somehow these men here don't seem to know anything about saving money. They go to spending it on beer, and pawning their clothes to live with."

And Larry uttered a heavy sigh and remained silent for several minutes, while Molly's face lengthened considerably; for anything that grieved Larry made her wretched.

Presently she said in a hesitating way:

"Then ain't it certain that—the—strike—is—going to succeed?"

Larry roused himself instantly.

"Succeed? Ay, ay, it *ought* to succeed. If they were all men it would soon succeed. They have all the chances in their favor. But then there's a big lot of them, and it's hard to find such a number where there's not more than one coward in the lot. And one or two going to work on the low scale would set a number more going. It's the same on both sides. If they only knew it, Grynde has nigh broken the manufacturers' backs by starting his works on the old scale. If they would only hold on, we've got the bosses where we want them."

"And won't they hold on, Larry dear?"

"I don't know. They threw a good deal away yesterday."

"How, Larry?"

"By getting mad, and smashing Kelly & Barr's windows."

"And why did they do that?"

"Because the bosses pretended they wouldn't recognize me, or have anything to do with me or the Knights of Labor."

Molly nodded her head angrily.

"I'm glad they did it. Wouldn't have anything to say to my Larry, indeed! Who are they, I should like to know? I wish they'd broken their old heads for them."

Larry smiled rather ruefully.

"You're as bad as they are. But what was the consequence of the riot?"

"I don't know. What?"

"That the bosses telegraphed for troops, and the governor has sent them."

"Well, what of that, Larry? They won't hurt anybody, will they?"

"Not unless some fools go to making another riot. If that comes, there will be trouble."

Molly patted his shoulder affectionately.

"Don't be down-hearted, Larry boy. Maybe they won't be such fools. I only wish we were as safe about the house as about the strike!"

Larry seemed to cheer up at once at the rather mournful tone of his wife, for he said:

"Oh, that's all right. Mr. Paul tells me so, and I can always believe what he says. He tells me how old Skinner was in too much of a hurry to buy Briggs's mortgage. If he'd looked he wouldn't have lost his money. Old Briggs, he knew all about it, and wouldn't never have sued us, but when he got an offer of cash for the whole debt, it warn't human nature to refuse it. I don't like to keep a man out of his money, ye know, but needs must when the devil drives."

Molly was about to answer, when they heard the distant rattle of wheels, and saw a black buggy driving up the road from Holesburg, and Larry observed:

"That looks very like Lawyer Scriven's buggy. I wonder if he's a-coming here?"

Molly shuddered.

"I hope not. Last time he was here he scared me out of my seven senses, asking me for the money, and I hadn't got it."

"It is his buggy, and he's coming here," said Larry, decidedly. "There's some news in the case. You go in and tend to things. Maybe he wants to speak to me alone."

Molly went in at once, and the buggy rattled nearer, revealing to Larry the old roan horse of Mr. Scriven, driven this time, not by the old lawyer, but by Paul Van Beaver, who drew up at the cottage door, and said, as he alighted:

"Quite a change in beasts since first I knew you, Larry. My tandem and cart were rather different to this old plug and rattletrap of a buggy. But never mind, old fellow. I've earned this, and the other was given or rather lent to me, which is different."

Paul looked a different man from the quiet, crushed, humiliated Paul who had been left to his uncle's tender mercies a few months before, and equally different from the old, careless, spendthrift Paul, who had been his grandfather's spoiled darling in the days of old. There was in his face the solid look of a man who respected himself and felt that he had a place in the world, could earn his own living and owe no man anything.

He came and sat down on the stone bench by Larry, saying:

"Well, how goes the strike?"

"Well enough, Mr. Paul, if they'd only let it alone."

"How let it alone?"

"We've got things in our own hands. Stone & Grynde have given way, and granted the old scale, and they started their mill to-day. It's only a question of another week but the others come in if they're only let alone."

"Who interfere with them?"

"The men. These fellows are all new to the Order. They've never had a fight before, and they lose their tempers and go to making riots."

"Ay, ay," observed Paul, thoughtfully. "I heard of that, and I see there's a whole regiment of men quartered in the City Hall. I hope they won't come to blows with the strikers."

"They won't if I can help it, Mr. Paul; but our men don't see how near they are to having everything their own way. They want to get back to work, and they won't do it on the old terms. They want the first scale, and don't know how to get it."

Paul began to drum on his knees in an absent manner, and at length observed:

"I say, Larry."

"Yes, Mr. Paul."

"Mr. Scriven received a paper for you to-day."

"Yes, sir; what was it?"

"A motion to dismiss."

"And what's that, Mr. Paul?"

Paul explained to him:

"It's a paper that says, even admitting all you say to be true, you have no standing in court. And Mr. Van Slack's going to move to strike out your answer to-morrow."

Larry scratched his head.

"I don't know much about these things," he said. "I leave them all to you, Mr. Paul. If I get beaten, the most I can do is to lose this little shanty, such as it is, and move away to the West. But I don't want to do that."

"Neither do I want you to do it," returned Paul, in the same absent way. "Between you and me, Larry—"

He stopped short, as if hesitating to speak any more, and Larry, understanding that he feared to be overheard, rose and led his guest to the gate, where they were out of earshot of any one, when he whispered:

"What is it, Mr. Paul? I'll not tell a soul."

Paul laid his hand on his arm.

"Larry, I've found out why old Scriven was so willing to take me, young as I was, into his office as partner."

Larry nodded.

"I told ye there was something behind it all. It wasn't a good gentleman like your poor grandfather that was going to leave you a beggar, after spoiling you for business as he did when you were a boy."

"No, so it seems; and Scriven, it appears, drew the will with his own hand, and he says there's a clause in it that no one knows of but himself, and which is likely to be affected by this strike."

"And what's that, Mr. Paul?" asked Larry, in some excitement at the news.

"Well, it appears that so long as the works are carried on, Marcellus Skinner has full control over them; but, as soon as they stop, and the making of steel becomes unprofitable, the whole thing ought to be sold and the money divided between—"

"Between you and him?" asked Larry, eagerly.

"Yes, Larry."

The young workman turned away from his friend and walked up and down the little garden several times till he had fully mastered the significance of the news, and then came up to Paul and asked in a low voice:

"And if the strike keeps on, will ye be able to make him sell out?"

"I think so, Larry. At least, Mr. Scriven talks of applying for an order in court on it."

Larry nodded as one well satisfied.

"That settles it, Mr. Paul."

"Settles what, Larry?"

"The strike, sir. I own I was getting a bit down-hearted myself; but now we'll stick to it, till all the bosses come down; and if Boss Skinner don't come down with the rest, so much the better for you."

"But you mustn't let it affect you in any way," said Paul, reluctantly. "It's true that if the mill's sold it will benefit me, but—"

"But that's enough, Mr. Paul," said Larry, decidedly. "I was thinking what was the use of my fighting for other people, awhile ago; now I don't care. This strike goes through, win or lose, and some one will be better off for it."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TRAMP'S PARASITE.

PAUL VAN BEAVER did not stay long at Larry's place that evening after he had communicated his news, for he had a good deal to do at home in drawing papers, and he took his departure early.

As he drove home in the dusk of the evening, he was accosted by a tramp who seemed to start up out of the darkness at the roadside, and who asked him:

"Say, mister, d'ye know where a man could get a night's lodging for self and mate?"

Paul saw another dark figure by the side of the first tramp, who seemed to be a big fellow, and he felt rather apprehensive that they intended to stop him, so he said sharply:

"Get out of my road. Go to the station-house, if you want a night's lodging."

"Ay, ay," returned the tramp, sulkily. "It's all very well to say station-house, but how's a man to know where it is? Say, mister, don't ye know where there's a man named Skinner, a big-bug, where he lives?"

Paul was so much surprised at the question that he asked:

"What Skinner do you mean? Marcellus?"

"Ay, ay, that's the man," returned the tramp, eagerly. "D'ye know where he lives?"

Paul told him and drove on, wondering what the tramp could want with his uncle; but soon forgot all about it when he got settled to his night's work.

Meantime the tramp said to his partner as they trudged along to the city:

"Snoopey, old pal, it's time me and you stopped trampin' and turned 'spectable. The weather's gittin' chilly, and I ain't as young as I used to be."

Snoopey gave a sniff and a whine.

"And I'm gettin' the roomatiz bad, Jim, and money don't last no time, does it?"

Terror Jim growled.

"It lasts as long as I want it. W'ot's the use of savin' it? A short life and a merry one; that's what I say."

"But s'posin' a man ain't got nothen to be merry on?" said Snoopey. "W'ot's he to do then, Jim?"

"Take w'ot he kin get and durn the odds, Snoopey. We ain't goin' to no county jail this winter, you bet your boots."

"Where are we a-goin' then?" asked Snoopey, who was a sort of banger-on to Terror Jim, following him as the jackal does the lion, finding the prey and taking his humble share after the lion had done.

Terror Jim nodded his head in mysterious fashion, as he answered:

"I'm a-goin' to see a friend of mine, Snoopey, a big-bug, the man I came to see three months ago. He's got to come down and take keer of me and you this winter, or there'll be trouble in the house."

Snoopey seemed to be uncomfortable at the idea, for he asked, hesitatingly:

"We ain't goin' near that man's house where I got the swag, are we? 'Cause he's a bad man to meet."

"No, ye fool, no," retorted Jim. "You make me sick, you do, Snoopey. That feller ain't here now. He's out in 'Hio, cuss him! I hope he'll stay there. I don't want nothen more to do with him. I thought I was a good man myself, but he's a holy terror."

Snoopey shivered.

"D'ye mind how he come on us—"

"Shut up," growled Jim. "What if he did? We was asleep, and he had a club. But he didn't get no money out of us; did he?"

"No," assented Snoopey. "But I thought one time he was a-goin' to. What was it he said to you, Jim, when you and him got off alone together?"

"Never you mind," returned Jim, evasively. "Not so much as he thought. See here, Snoopey, we're a-comin' into the town, now, and we don't want to be seed too close together, we don't. You jest go to the station-house, and I'll see you to-morrow mornin'."

"All right," said Snoopey, submissively, and he shambled off down a side street and round a corner. Terror Jim watched him till he was out of sight.

Then the big tramp set off boldly in the opposite direction, and walked on till he came to the handsome house in which Marcellus Skinner resided.

He did not notice, in his secure lordship over the obsequious Snoopey, that the lesser tramp had peeped round the corner as soon as his leader strode off, and had come slinking and shuffling after him, all the way to Skinner's house, keeping in the shadows as much as he could.

Snoopey watched Jim go boldly up the steps of the house and ring the front-door bell, and the lesser tramp muttered:

"Golly! ain't he a-goin' it? Wish I had his cheek."

He waited and saw the door thrown wide open, when a prim waiter exclaimed, angrily:

"What are you a-doin' here? Who are you? Go to the basement-door. We ain't got no cold wittles to give away."

"And I ain't wantin' no cold wittles," cried Jim, just as angrily. "I'm a gentleman, I am, and I want to see the boss here. No ye don't, slavey. I warn't born yesterday."

Snoopey saw that his friend had stuck his shoulder between the door and post so that the waiter couldn't close it, and he wondered what was going to happen, when the prim man shouted:

"Hi! John, John! Come here! Here's a bug-gler a-tryin' to git in!"

Then Snoopey heard a rapid step, and another prim man came running up, at which Terror Jim dealt the first waiter a butt in the face with the side of his head, which sent the man staggering back with a howl, when the tramp squared himself under the hall-lamp, roaring:

"Come on, ye darned niggers! I kin whip a hull company of such as ye! Where's Cap Skinner? Hi! Hi! Skinnerrr! Hi! Where are ye?"

Snoopey began to tremble with excitement, and to wonder what was going to become of Terror Jim; for the second man had stopped short, and was rummaging in a corner of the hall, as if to find a weapon.

The little tramp crept close to the house, and saw that the basement door was open, so he slipped down the area steps while everybody was busy up-stairs, and speedily found himself in a lower hall, with a cupboard at the end, from whence he could command a view of the front door, himself unseen.

Terror Jim seemed disposed to hold the fort, for he slammed the door shut, and kept his stand under the hall-lamp, roaring:

"Hi, Skinnerrr! Skinnerrr! Where are ye? Come and tell these blooming chumps who I be! Ain't I a friend of yours?"

The first waiter, who had been discomfited so easily, now came back to the second, and Snoopey heard them whisper:

"He's crazy! We'll have to send for the cops."

Just then the sound of a door opening on the landing above, was followed by a stern voice, calling out:

"What the deuce is all that noise about?"

"It's a tramp, sir," called one waiter, "and he won't go out."

"Put him out, then," shouted the voice above. "What do I keep ye for, ye lazy brutes?"

Then Terror Jim roared back:

"Hi! Skinner, what are ye givin' us? Come down here, ye bloomin' old sinner. It's an old pal's come to see ye, and he wants a bit of grub and a glass of grog."

Snoopey listened intently, and noticed that the tramp's words produced an immediate silence, followed soon after by the tread of a heavy foot on the stairs.

He could see that the two waiters looked as if they were overcome by surprise, but they both fell back, and Snoopey saw a large, stout man, with gray hair, come down to Terror Jim, and say, in a constrained sort of way, as if trying to make the best of it:

"What makes you dress in such a way, so that one can hardly know you? Been out hunting, I suppose?"

Terror Jim laughed heartily.

"Why, how'd you know that, Cap? Ay, ay, I've been huntin', and I'm as hungry as a hunter, too. Lemme see. Meand you used to wear the same close onst—"

"Yes, yes," hastily interrupted Skinner, "I'll fit you out. Come up-stairs to the bathroom and get a wash, and I'll lend you a suit of clothes. You shouldn't go about in that sort of way. People would think you were a tramp."

Then he turned to the waiters, saying:

"You can go. Get ready a good supper in the back dining-room. This gentleman and I have some business to do together, and we don't want to be disturbed."

Snoopey withdrew into the cupboard, and said to himself:

"Ye have, have ye? Maybe I won't find out what it is? I guess not!"

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. SKINNER'S VISITOR.

To Snoopey, the tramp, sly by nature, and trained by education to all sorts of secretive tricks, it was an easy matter to hide himself away in that big house.

He waited till Skinner and Terror Jim had gone up-stairs, and the waiters had disappeared in the kitchen, when he very quietly slipped out of his cupboard, went up-stairs to the next landing, looked into all the rooms, decided on the dining-room where the long dining-table was covered with a heavy crimson cloth that fell to the carpet all round it.

Under this cloth Snoopey very quietly secreted himself and observed with great satisfaction that he was quite secure.

The dining-room had large French windows at the rear opening into a garden, and as the house was built on a corner lot, the trampsaw that his retreat in any event would be an easy one, for he knew that Terror Jim, even if he discovered him, could never catch him.

Jim was twice as strong as Snoopey, but Snoopey could run away from Jim at any time, though he hoped to have no occasion to do the same that night, for he felt in great terror of his brutal partner.

The tramp curled himself up under the table and waited, and presently the waiters came in to lay the cloth at one end, when Snoopey heard one say to the other:

"I ain't goin' to stay in this place much longer, John, if things goes on this way. It's bad enough to have to stand the low ways of that Trainor feller without a tramp comin' in, and me havin' to lay supper for him."

"What's odds?" returned John, philosophical. "The pay's good. These second-chop fellers allers pays well, and they're afeard to say much to a man who's been in a good house. There, that's enough for the likes of him. Cold beef, chicken, ham, and a apple pie. Guess he never had such a lay-out afore. What'll we give him to drink?"

"Water," returned the first man, with great disdain. "I ain't goin' to light no fire for coffee for him. Let the boss unlock the whisky-bottle if he wants to. I don't want to clean up after no boozy tramps."

"Right you are," said John, heartily. "I don't know where you're a-goin', James, but I'm a-goin' to take a stroll. If the boss wants us, let him holler. But I guess he don't want to show off his friend to us."

Then the men left the room, and Snoopey rubbed his hands, saying to himself:

"Jest what I want. If they'll go out, I'll have the house to myself."

He saw that the discipline of the Skinner mansion was decidedly lax, and there were no evidences of any women about the place.

As a matter of fact, Marcellus Skinner had none but male servants, and they had grown very independent during the strike.

Snoopey waited a few minutes and heard the basement-door slam, from which he rightly judged that John and James had gone deliberately away from the house to escape further service.

Then he crept out from under the cloth and took a look at the table, which was spread with a most appetizing cold supper. On one dish was a pair of chickens, and the tramp said to himself with a grin:

"They won't miss one, I reckon."

So he took one out of the dish, retired under the table again and began to gnaw it with great gusto.

Presently he stopped eating to listen, for he heard steps on the stairs, and a little later into the room walked his friend, Terror Jim, with the master of the house, who said:

"There, Somers, if you're hungry, you won't find better in a hotel. I've had enough hard times, and I live as well as I know how nowa-days."

Snoopey laid himself down flat on the floor, with the corner of his head out to survey his friend, who stood in the light of a lamp on the table.

Snoopey hardly recognized Terror Jim. He was handsomely dressed, and his rough, straggling hair and beard had been trimmed into decent proportions, so that he bore the appearance of a seafaring man, come in from a long voyage, and taking a cruise ashore in his best.

Snoopey could hardly tell what put the idea into his head. He had known Jim for seven or eight years, and had never heard him mention the sea; yet the moment he saw him dressed in Skinner's clothes, he thought how much like a sailor Terror Jim looked.

The first words uttered by his comrade told him that his suspicions were correct.

"Ay, ay," returned Jim, with a sort of half-sulky growl, "it's well enough for you, Cap, as used to live in the cabin when I was a-slushin' down topmasts and holystonin' decks. But you allers had the luck and I didn't. Do you remember that 'ere Afriky v'yage—?"

"There, there," interrupted Skinner, hastily. "Never mind the African voyage. Eat and drink, and be merry. Hello! they've put nothing but water on the table. I'll go and call them up—"

"Don't ye do no sech thing," interrupted the tramp in his turn. "I ain't been in this kind of a house so often, but what I know a thing or two. Look a-there at that sideboard. Hain't ye got nothin' to drink in there?"

Skinner seemed to hesitate.

"Yes—that is—I didn't know if you'd care for what's in there."

"Care for it? What'n blazes do ye take me for? A bloomin' chump? Trot out the whisky, ye darned old galoot, so I kin take a snifter afore I eat."

Again Skinner seemed to hesitate, for he finally said, rather stiffly:

"If you please; but mind, it won't do to get drunk in this house. I've got a position to keep up now, and—"

"Oh, come off the roof," interrupted Jim, rudely. "Position be blowed! Ain't you and me old shipmates, and hain't we got drunk together, many's the time—"

"Say no more. You shall have it," interposed Skinner, soothingly; "but don't make such a noise, man. Here, here!"

Snoopey saw him go and unlock the sideboard, and the tramp's eyes glittered at the array of silver he saw there beside the bottles, as the mill-owner left the door open, while he brought back the whisky-bottle to the table.

Then Terror Jim poured out a large drink, tossed it off like so much water, and said:

"Now I kin punish the grub, I reckon."

With that he sat down and began to eat, while Snoopey, under the table-cloth, gnawed at his chicken as silently as he could and listened all the while to what was going on.

At last Jim seemed to have satisfied his appetite, for he drew back his chair, put out his feet, and observed to Skinner:

"Reckon I'll do now. What brand of cigars do you smoke? None of your five-cent stinkers now, Cap. I know you of old. You was allers a mean one when you got the chance. I come here to have a good talk with you, and I can't talk so well unless I have somethin' to smoke."

"Wouldn't a pipe answer?" asked Skinner.

Jim laughed scornfully.

"A pipe indeed! Why, tramps smokes them. I ain't no tramp. I'm your old shipmate, Jim Somers, what made your fortin' for ye, by puttin' yer in the way of—"

"Hush! hush!" interrupted Skinner, in an agitated way. "I'll get you some cigars, and then you can tell me what you want to say, but talk low, for Heaven's sake. Don't be so noisy."

As he spoke Snoopey saw him go to the sideboard and bring out a box of cigars, which he put on the table, when Terror Jim stretched out his hoofs and began to smoke.

Presently he remarked lazily:

"That's a pretty good cigar, Cap. Good enough to have come from Cuby without payin' eny dooty. Now then comes that little talk I spoke about, and I want you to listen."

"Certainly, certainly," was the nervous reply. "Speak on, Somers. What is it?"

Snoopey pricked up his ears. He was going to hear something at last.

Terror Jim cleared his throat.

"Waal," he said, "to tell the truth I'm jest about tired of trampin' and I want to settle down. I want to git a place where I kin have my meals reg'lar, with a bottle of whisky when I feel like it, and where I won't have to beg the

money to pay my bills. In short, Cap, I want you to jest come down handsome, as you kin well afford to do, and give your old messmate a chance to make the best of his figure and marry a rich gal. That's me."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A NICE LITTLE PLAN.

SNOOPEY was so taken aback by the sublime impudence of his partner that he muttered to himself under his breath:

"Great Caesar, what a gall!"

But, to his surprise, Skinner did not seem to take the matter ill, for he said:

"I suppose we might do something for you. How would you like a place in the mill when we get to work?"

Jim laughed rather scornfully.

"In the mill? What to do? Work?"

Skinner moved uneasily in his chair.

"Of course. We all have to work, don't we? I do, at all events."

Terror Jim laughed again.

"I don't, if I kin help it. You know that me and you knowed how to shirk work, didn't we, when we was on the old—"

"Hush!" interrupted Skinner, cautiously.

"Some one might be listening."

"Let 'em listen," retorted Jim, but he pitched his voice on a lower key nevertheless. "I mean this. Me and you was on the old 'Rora. You was bo's'n and I was cook. Well, we two came home in the 'Rora as cap'n and mate, didn't we? How did we do it?"

There was a short silence and Skinner said in a low tone:

"You know as well as I do. The officers all died of the fever."

Jim chuckled.

"Ay, ay, call it the fever. It's a good place to die in, out at sea, 'cause there's no questions axed. No coroners, nor nothen. It's a good place to die in. But you know, old messmate, who gave me the arsenic to put into the soup, and I know it too. It was lucky there warn't no doctor aboard the old 'Rora. Now I ain't on the work no more. I ain't. I want a soft place. If you wants any work done, I ain't there. If you wants any man took out of the way I'm agreeable; but that's as far as I go to 'arn my living."

Snoopey heard Skinner make a quick movement of his chair, and ask in a tone of impatience:

"Well, will you do that then?"

"Sartin I will," replied Terror Jim, with perfect coolness. "That's what I came to do for you. I'm on the fight, if you want it, but I ain't on the work."

There was a short silence in the room, and then Skinner said:

"Do you know a man called Larry Locke?"

Terror Jim growled.

"Larry Locke? Yes, blast him!"

"Well, I want to get rid of him," said the mill-owner, in a low tone. "If you can get him out of the way within three days I'll give you five-hundred dollars."

Terror Jim shook his head.

"That ain't so easy, Cap. He's a hard nut, and I don't want to try and crack it."

"You needn't do it alone," returned Skinner. "You can take all the men you want, and I'll pay them, so long as he's got rid of. He's the life and soul of this strike, and none of the men would stick out so long if he didn't hold them up."

"Well, Cap," returned Terror Jim, slowly. "I'll see what I kin do, with some boys I know; but seems to me that you're a-wasting your powder on him. He ain't the man to go fur. It's them as is settin' him on."

"What do you mean?" asked Skinner, in a tone of surprise.

"I mean ain't there no one else you hate worse? This Larry's only a workman, ain't he?"

"Yes; to be sure—but he's a leader too. He puts up the jobs for the rest."

"I know all that," returned Jim; "but ain't there some one else?"

"Who else can there be?" asked Skinner, in an uneasy manner. "I don't deny there is, but what do you know about it?"

"I know this much about it," retorted Jim, "that I've heard a good deal of talk about a nevy of yourn, one Paul Von Beaver, that they say you hate like pi-on. Ain't he the next heir or suthin'?"

Skinner seemed to be still more surprised.

"How did you know that?" he asked, with a sort of gasp.

"By usin' my eyes and ears," retorted Jim.

"There was a English feller used to be with his hosses, and he got to drinking and got into trouble. Him and me was in county jail together, and he told me how you'd come and got the old man to make some kind of will to cut off the boy, and how he wouldn't only give you the use of the place for life. Ain't that correct?"

"Yes," returned Skinner, with some relief.

"Is that the way you found it out?"

"Ay, ay, I found it. These fellers that works allers has a good deal to say about what goes on in the house. Well, so I jest thought

that if that young feller was out of the way, you'd be ever so much better off. Hey?"

"I don't deny it," said Skinner, in a low tone; "but then how are you going to get at him?"

Terror Jim chuckled.

"Oh! so it's come to that. How am I to get at him? You jest tell me where he goes and who's his friends, and I'm the man to get into a muss with him, so he won't know what struck him."

"That's easy enough. Listen to me."

Skinner's voice sunk to a whisper, so that Snoopey could not hear what was said, till Terror Jim observed:

"That's all I want to know. I'll set my friend Snoopey on him, and he'll run him down darned quick."

"And who's Snoopey?" asked Skinner.

Snoopey himself pricked up his ears to hear the answer, which was:

"Oh, he's a sort of hanger-on of mine. He's a good enough feller, if you whip him onst a week reg'lar. He's the best man to find out where a feller goes I ever seen, but he ain't none on the fight."

Snoopey felt a thrill of anger animate his ordinarily gentle breast at the not very flattering description, and Terror Jim went on to say:

"Snoopey shall find him and you kin leave Snoopey alone to make an excuse that will take him outside the city some dark night—"

"Why not to-night?" interrupted Skinner, with great suddenness.

"Nothen, only Snoopey's in the station-house by this time," said Jim; "and they won't let him out till morning."

"And what do you want of any Snoopey at all?" the millionaire demanded, sharply. "I can do a good deal for you, Somers, but I'm not going to have in all the tramps in the State to help. Look here; why don't you do it yourself? No one will know you in those good clothes, and you can get in to see him without any trouble."

"That might do," observed Terror Jim, in a musing way; "but how should I get him out in the dark? You understand this sort of a job's easy enough, if once you get well in with a man; but how'm I to get in with him? I don't know him."

"I'll see to that," returned Skinner, briskly. "I'll fix up a message from my lawyer to him about this very Larry Locke, and you can get them both together."

Terror Jim grunted.

"I don't want to get 'em together. One at a time is all and more than I want, Cap. This here Larry Locke's a holy terror, he is."

"Then you'll have to get a gang together to lay them out," returned Skinner, in a tone that showed he had settled the matter to his own satisfaction. "Look here, I've got it."

"What have you got?" asked Jim, with a sort of sneer.

"I've got the plan."

"What plan? What to do?"

"To get him into the trap. You come with me, and I'll write a letter and take you round to my lawyer's. He shall fit you out and you must see to setting up the gang for to-morrow. How long would it take you to get a dozen men, hard cases all, and have them ready? I'd give them ten dollars apiece, and nothing to do for it but slug the man you showed them."

Terror Jim considered awhile.

"I could do it to-morrow," he said; "but I'd want a good lump sum for the job. No five hundred dollars wouldn't pay me for the risk. Why, it's a hanging matter, or State Prison for life at best."

"You shall have a thousand," returned the mill-owner, promptly. "Is that enough?"

"Enough? Yes, to pay them; but not me. You don't know what you're talking of, Cap. Ten dollars apiece to slug a man stiff, and maybe all be found out. The job's worth a hundred at least for each man, to make it safe."

Skinner groaned.

"What an extortionate fellow you are? If I promise the money down, will you make the job sure for both? I want to end this strike and get rid of that Paul at once. I'll pay the money to see it done safe, but I won't be fooled into paying it for a mere failure. I won't pay till the work's done and I've seen the bodies."

"That's correct, Cap," returned Jim, coolly; "I don't ax no more. All I want to know for certain is that the work's to be paid for. A hundred dollars apiece for the men, and two thousand for myself. Is that a bargain?"

Skinner hesitated a few moments, and at last said:

"Yes. Since I can't help myself, I suppose I must do it. I consent."

"All right," returned Jim, briskly. "I'm all ready now. You get up your letter, and I'll go round and spot this young man, so as I may know him again."

CHAPTER XXXII.

SNOOPEY TURNS HIS COAT.

LARRY LOCKE was looking rather blue as he stood on the court-house steps, beside Paul Van Beaver, next morning.

He had just learned that his answer had been

"stricken out" of the pleadings in his case on technical grounds, and his only consolation lay in the fact that the court had granted his lawyers five days' time to draw another answer, after a hot argument between Scriven and Van Slack.

Paul was trying to cheer him up by saying:

"Never mind it now, Larry. Be ready to swear to your new answer to-morrow, and I'll engage it holds water. Mr. Scriven is no fool, and he has full confidence in the case. We'll pull you through yet."

"But it's going to cost a heap of money," said Larry, gloomily. "Sometimes I think it would be cheaper to let the poor old place go, and move away. The strike ain't no nearer an end than it was when the men quit work, and they blame me."

"Let them blame you," returned Paul, cheerfully. "They don't know what's going on. Mr. Scriven told me this morning that he had been consulted by one prominent mill-owner as to whether, if he left the Union, the rest could sue him for damages if he broke the strike. Scriven told him no, and the owner expressed himself as willing to yield to the men. Tell them that. It is no less a man than Kelly, of Kelly & Barr. What do you think of that?"

Larry's eyes gleamed with joy.

"Is that really so? If he gives in, the rest must follow. Why, he rolls as many rails as all the rest, except Skinner."

"Skinner's the only one likely to hold out," said Paul, "and he can't do it forever. Well, Larry, good-by now. I'll see you to-morrow morning."

And the young man strode away, while Larry hastened down to the place where the strikers were wont to meet to discuss matters, to give them the news.

He did not notice that Paul and himself were both watched by a puny, furtive-looking man, who hung around near them and followed him toward the meeting; and it was not till he was about to enter the room that he noticed the man.

When he did so he started and frowned, for the follower was close to him.

"What! You here?" he exclaimed, fiercely. "Do you want me to wring your neck, you infernal thief? But for you, I—"

And then he choked, unable to proceed, as he recognized Snoopey.

The tramp shrunk back as if he expected a blow, but managed to stammer:

"Don't! Fur God's sake don't! I don't mean ye no harm, before heaven. Jest listen to me, only a moment—"

"Listen to you?" repeated Larry, contemptuously. "What can you say to me? Didn't you rob my house, and oughtn't I to have choked the life out of you?"

"Yes, yes," admitted Snoopey, humbly; "but I ain't as bad as I look, boss. I've suthin' to tell ye. You're in danger—"

"Danger!" repeated Larry, still more scornfully. "From you? No; for I've made up my mind to kill you if ever I catch you round my shanty again."

"It ain't from me," urged Snoopey, still more humbly. "It's from others; them as is able to lay you out. I heerd suthin' yestiddy night I want to tell ye, just to let ye know."

"And I've no time to listen to you," answered Larry roughly. "Think yourself lucky I don't put you in jail for what you've done."

With that he turned about to enter the hall where the meeting was to be held, when he heard some one calling:

"Mr. Locke! Oh, Mr. Locke!"

The voice was that of a person of cultivation, and Larry turned round, to see a thin man in professional black, with an irreproachable white necktie, like a clergyman.

In this gentleman he recognized Skinner's lawyer, Van Slack, and at once put on his most independent air, for he knew the man to be his enemy.

Mr. Van Slack came up, and said in the most polite manner:

"My dear sir, I've been hunting for you in all directions. I have been wanting to see you for ever so long."

"What for?" asked Larry stiffly.

Mr. Van Slack glanced round him.

"A little business," he said in a low tone. "My client, Mr. Skinner, is not as hard a man as you think, and I—well—I want to see you in private, and have a little talk."

Larry shrugged his shoulders.

"Very sorry, but we've a meeting here this morning, and I'm wanted. Why don't you go to Mr. Scriven?"

"Precisely because you are the person I want to see and Scriven is not. Between you and me, Mr. Locke—"

Here he came closer and lowered his voice:

"Scriven's not much of a lawyer or he wouldn't have drawn his answer in such a bungling way. I can beat him every time. You're a different man. I can feel for you. Now can't you spare me a few minutes in my office? It's just round the corner."

"Not unless I know what you want to speak about," was the obstinate reply.

"Well, then, I'll tell you," said Van Slack in a low tone.

Then he turned on Snoopey, who still hung near listening:

"My good man," he said, "please go a little further off. I've private business with this gentleman."

Snoopey sneaked off to a little distance, and Van Slack began glibly:

"Now, my dear sir, my dear Mr. Locke, I've no doubt you think I'm an enemy of yours. Never was a greater mistake. We lawyers have no enemies. We don't like any hard feelings from any one."

"Hum!" replied Larry dryly, "then you should act different. You want to turn me out of my house, and then you wonder that I feel mad about it."

"But, my dear sir," responded the lawyer in his most coaxing tones, "you're making a mistake. We don't want to turn you out of your house at all."

Larry looked at him incredulously.

"Not want to turn me out? Then why are you suing me?"

Van Slack took him by the button, to say in the sleekest of tones:

"Only for a purpose, my dear sir. How would you like to sell your house?"

Larry positively started, and his face brightened considerably.

"To sell it?" he echoed. "Why, I would do it in a minute, if I could get enough to pay me what I've put on it."

"My dear sir," said Van Slack quietly, "I can offer you enough to cover all your mortgage, and leave you a thousand dollars clear. How would that suit?"

Larry's face answered him better than words, and the lawyer continued:

"There! That's the business I want to talk to you about. You see it can't be done in the street. Will you come to my office?"

Larry made no further resistance.

"Yes, I'll come," he said; and he accompanied the lawyer down the street and round the corner to the office of Snapper & Van Slack, where he was taken into the innermost sanctum of all, the lawyer rubbing his hands in a way that showed he was well pleased with his success as far as he had gone.

Snoopey saw them go off, and he sneaked after them, and sat down on the office-steps to wait till they came out.

The secretive tramp wore on his face a new expression, and kept muttering:

"I've got to do it. I must get a chance. There's money in it. I know there is. If I could only get him to listen. If I can't, maybe the other one will. But I'll stick to this one first."

Meantime, up-stairs in the inner office, Larry Locke had been shown to a luxurious arm-chair, while the lawyer took a humble cane stool, and began the conversation at once.

"Well, Mr. Locke, and how much do you value your place at?"

"Twenty-five hundred," said Larry promptly.

"It cost me—"

"Two thousand, my dear sir, just two thousand," was the polite interruption. "Twenty-five hundred's a very steep price, as you must be aware, of course."

"It's what I want and what I'm going to get, or I don't treat," returned Larry, who had not lived in vain, for he had bargained before. "We may as well settle that, mister, before we go any further. Twenty-five hundred, and I'll sell, and pay Skinner his money. If I don't get that, I'll fight, and Mr. Scriven tells me you'll never get a cent."

Mr. Van Slack smiled and rubbed his hands.

"Exactly. Mr. Scriven is a very worthy man, but I struck out his answer to-day, you know. I wouldn't trust too much to what he says about the suit. Between you and me, Mr. Locke, you've no defense, and if you keep on, you'll be sold out at auction, and the little mortgage will cover the place and not leave you a cent over."

Larry looked at him with a half smile.

"Then, if that's the case," he said, "why do you offer to buy at all?"

Mr. Van Slack shrugged his shoulders.

"Pure kindness of heart, my dear sir. We lawyers are all soft-hearted. Clients! Clients are pig-headed and quarrelsome; but we have to cool them down. I'll tell you what I'll do with you. Mr. Skinner has given me full powers to treat with you. I'll give you what you ask—twenty-five hundred—if you'll sign the deed and leave Holesburg at noon to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAWYER'S BRIBE.

"LEAVE Holesburg at noon?" echoed Larry.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Only this, my dear sir," said Van Slack, in his smoothest tones, "that unless you leave Holesburg at noon, my offer falls to the ground."

Larry was taken aback.

"But I don't want to leave Holesburg," he said. "I know the folks here, and the strike's nearly over. My family was all born and raised here, and I don't want to leave it. Besides, I

"can't leave. I'm pledged to the boys to stand by them."

Mr. Van Slack shrugged his shoulders.

"I see I was mistaken in you. I took you for a sensible man, Locke. Don't you see you're getting eighteen hundred dollars cash? Why, a man of your ability could go to Ohio, where the wages are higher than here, and set up for himself in a small way. That's how workmen elevate themselves. Begin to employ other men, and save the difference in wages. Look here. I'll tell you what I'll do with you. The mortgage is seven hundred dollars, isn't it? Yes. Well. If you'll go home and get your wife, bring her here and sign to-day, I'll give you two thousand cash for all you have on the place, and get you a ticket for Cleveland by the six o'clock train to-night. How's that?"

"It's a very good offer," returned Larry, with a shaking voice. "If it wasn't for the strike I'd do it in a minute. But I can't, sir; indeed I can't. It wouldn't be honorable, till the strike's over. I'll agree to go then, as soon as you like."

"Confound it, man, can't you see?" broke in the lawyer, pettishly. "Can't you see what's the matter? Don't be a blind fool, Locke. Two thousand cash to carry off will keep your family for years."

"And don't you see," cried Larry, angrily, "that I wouldn't sell myself for twenty thousand cash? I'm District Master Workman, and I'm bound to the boys. You've offered twenty-five hundred cash, and I'll take it, but I won't leave Holesburg till the strike's ended one way or the other. That's plain, isn't it?"

For a moment the lawyer was nonplused. He had expected to find in Larry a labor agitator working for notoriety and willing to sell out to the highest bidder.

Instead of this he had come up against an honest man, and Mr. Van Slack was not used to dealing with honest men.

In fact, he hardly believed in their existence, and came to the hasty conclusion that Larry must be playing off virtue to enhance the magnitude of his price.

He watched the workman furtively, for near a minute, and then said slowly:

"Till the strike's ended, one way or the other? Ah, yes, exactly. Well, now you're beginning to talk sense, Locke. You've a good deal of influence with these fellows, with your position. What will you take to advise them to go back to their work again? It might be worth an extra five hundred to you."

He spoke slowly and cautiously, watching his man, and felt rejoiced as he looked.

Larry's face wore a smile, and he asked:

"Then am I to understand that all this is to get me to end the strike and fill my own pockets? Is that it?"

"Why, of course," answered Van Slack, with a sly grin. "You're a fool if you don't do it, Mr. Locke. Workingmen! Bah! they're all a pack of—"

He got no further.

Larry Locke suddenly leaped up, his face looking like that of a demon, and pounced on the lawyer like a cat on a mouse. With the clutch of a vise he seized him by both shoulders and began to shake him so that Van Slack's teeth chattered.

And all the while he shook, his face grew more and more savage, while he growled:

"Buy me, will you, curse you? D'ye see any traitor in me, curse ye? I've a mind to choke the life out of ye now, ye skunk!"

For a moment Van Slack struggled, for he was no coward, and his face crimsoned with anger.

Then, when he found that he had no more chance than a baby in the hands of the Herculean Larry, his color began to leave him, and he wilted under the fierce glare of his enemy's eyes and tried to beg for mercy.

As for Larry, he shook and shook until he had sated his first feeling of rage, and then flung the lawyer down on the floor with a bang, and shook his finger at him, saying:

"You made a mistake that time, mister. You take darned good care how you come across me again, for I swear I think I'll kill you some time. Offer me money to turn traitor, would ye? That shows what your side thinks of; and, mark my words, this strike's going to end the right way; not the wrong one. Good-day to ye."

And Larry strode out of the room and down to the street, where he very nearly tumbled over Snoopey, who was sitting on the steps waiting for him.

The sight of the tramp angered him, so that he said, angrily:

"Get out of my way, if you don't want to get hurt."

He looked so savage that Snoopey shrunk out of the way in short order, and Larry went off down the street toward the meeting-room of the Knights, into which he went to find the men sitting gloomily round the room, waiting for him.

"We've b'en a-waitin' ever so long," said one, sulkily. "We can't get to work without you, and you know it."

They all looked sulky and disposed to find fault, but Larry affected not to notice anything

till he had ordered the doors closed and begun business at the meeting.

As soon as the routine work was over, he rapped for silence and made them a speech, in which he gave them the news he had received from Paul that morning, and a short history of the attempt of the lawyer to bribe him, concluding by saying:

"Now, brothers, you see what the matter is. It has been a long, hard struggle, but we're going to win. Skinner is the only man who's obstinate, and he'll have to give way at last. He sees it, and he's willing to pay for my absence. Now then, how many men here are in favor of sticking out?"

The answer was unanimous, but gloomy, and one man expressed the feelings of a good many when he said:

"We'll stick her out; but we can't last very much longer. If they don't give in soon, we'll have to, and we might as well die one way as the other. If we could get away to Ohio we'd do it; but we ain't got no money left to go there with."

The deliberations of the Knights were here interrupted by a knock at the outer door, and the doorkeeper announced, after a short conversation through the wicket, that a message had come from the Employers' Union, and that admission was asked.

A buzz of excitement went round the room, and Larry ordered that the messenger be admitted at once.

The workmen settled in their seats and looked as stiff and dignified as possible, when into the meeting-room came no less a person than Tom Trainor, whom most of them knew from the time he had been a boy in the Skinner works.

Tom looked round him rather sheepishly, and when he saw Larry in the master's chair, he looked decidedly uncomfortable, but he stiffened up as well as he could, till Larry asked him:

"Whence come you, and what have you to say, to the brethren of the Order?"

Tom swallowed once or twice in a nervous manner before he answered:

"I've come from the Manufacturers' Union, to propose a compromise."

"On what basis?" asked Larry, coldly.

Tom held out a letter.

"Here it is. Mind, I ain't responsible for it, so don't go to gittin' mad with me."

Larry took the letter, saying:

"You can retire. We'll send an answer. Your Union will remain in session how long?"

"They'd said they'd keep open till you sent an answer," replied Tom, "if you don't keep 'em more than half an hour after I come back."

"They shall have an answer within that time," responded Larry, and then Tom was shown out of the room and took his departure, while the secretary read out the letter from the Union.

It turned out to be a proposition for a compromise on the basis of half-way between the old and the new scale, and on its acceptance or rejection a fierce struggle sprung up among the workmen.

Many were sorely tempted to take it, in their poverty and misery, as better than keeping on earning nothing; while others insisted that the offer showed the masters were yielding, and that, if the men held out another day would secure a complete victory.

Larry Locke saw that the proposition to accept was likely to carry most votes, and he beckoned to one of his trusted lieutenants in the crowd, to whom he whispered:

"Move to postpone it till to-morrow. This is the crisis of the strike."

His follower, a sharp fellow, took the hint, went back to his place, and presently asked permission to address the chair.

Then he said that, as the message from the bosses was a surprise, and an important thing, he, for one, wanted a little time to think over it, and didn't want to act hastily. Therefore he moved to lay it over till next day, and send word to the bosses to that effect.

The idea seemed to take well, and was put to a vote almost immediately, when it was carried without trouble, and Larry Locke, with two others were appointed as a committee to take the decision to the bosses.

Then the meeting broke up, the men looking decidedly happier than when they came in the morning, while Larry with Jim Maguire and Steve Sutton, who had been appointed to go with him, took their way to the great mill of Kelly & Barr, where the manufacturers were wont to hold their meetings.

To his surprise the whole place was empty and deserted, save for a watchman inside the gate, who came when they shouted to him, and told them:

"Nobody ain't had no meetin' here to-day. The boss has left the Union. They're over at the Berkely Hotel, I reckon."

The Berkely Hotel was a well known place, and to that the committee proceeded, but as they went, Maguire and Sutton discussed excitedly the news that Kelly & Barr had left the Union.

"They must have done it, or he wouldn't have known it," remarked Larry, thoughtfully. "It has scared the rest, and they're trying to beat

us before Kelly beats them. Here's the place, boys."

They went into the hotel, which they found to be thronged with well-dressed people, for it was a commercial hotel, and the drummers were out in force.

They heard that the Ironmasters' Union met in room 17 and went up one flight to a large corridor, jammed with men talking together, amid whom they seemed to be lost.

"It's a political convention," said a gentleman, of whom Larry inquired the cause of the crowd. "Look out for your pockets," he added. "There's a pretty rough crowd here."

At the same moment Larry found that a crowd of men were pushing in on him with tremendous force.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LARRY'S DOUBLE-BANKING.

YES. There was no doubting the fact that the crowd was very dense and composed of strong men, as far as concerned that part near Larry and his friends.

In their plain working costume they were so different from the people round them that they had been "spotted" as soon as they first entered the corridor; and the politicians and "strikers" were hustling them, on purpose to annoy and confuse them.

Larry and his friends were too much used to rough horse-play to mind this, and they hustled back, swaying to and fro in the crowd, and taking it good-naturedly, till they came to the door of Room 17, which they found to be wide open, while, inside, stood a big man with a cigar in his mouth, by a table strewn with papers. There was something familiar in the face of this man to Larry; but he could not tell where he had seen him before.

He was tall, broad-shouldered and burly, with a clean-shaven chin and cheeks, and a close-clipped grizzled mustache, while his hair was cut as close as a convict's.

Round the room, lounging on chairs, were some other men who all seemed to be dressed in new clothes, and to have been recently barbered, none of whom did Larry recognize.

He and his friends went in, and Larry said:

"Is this the Bosses' Union?"

The big man turned to him, and surveyed him from head to foot with a dubious air.

"Yes it is," he said. "I'm the secretary. Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I'm Larry Locke, District Master Workman," said Larry, quietly. "You sent us a letter."

"Yes. Well, are you going to come down from your high horse?" asked the big man, gruffly. "We made the offer. Do you take it?"

"No," answered Larry, "we want more time to think over it. We'll give you an answer to-morrow."

The big man looked him over again.

"Hum! Ye will, will ye? Well, it'll be too late then. It ain't open. The bosses have agreed to shut the works and sell out, if you don't come down to them."

"They can shut up and go to blazes," retorted Larry, with some heat. "They've made a proposition and we shall hold them to it."

The big man sneered at him.

"Ye don't say. You're a healthy pill to hold any one to anything, you are. Get out of this room, or you'll get put out, darned quick."

Larry's eyes flashed.

"I'm going out, sir," he said, sternly; "but don't you go to talking of putting me out, or it will be the worse for you."

"It will, will it?" cried the big man, and as he spoke he snatched up from the table a heavy iron-wood ruler and looked round him.

"That's your man, boys," he cried. "Slug him!"

The men in new clothes round the room jumped up and came piling on the three workmen, without a word.

For one instant there was a fierce, silent struggle, Larry striking out and butting with his head, laying man after man prostrate, but the odds were too great.

In the midst of the melee the big man brought down the ruler on Larry with crushing force, while a battery of blows from brass knuckles rained on the back of his head, and Larry Locke, the Man of Iron, taken by surprise, twelve to one, dropped senseless on the floor, just as the politicians and strikers of the big convention outside came crowding in to part the combatants and entered unawares into a regular free fight, which swayed to and fro from the room to the corridor and back again, while shouts and cries made a Babel of the Berkely Hotel, to the dismay of the guests.

Out in the corridor, near the stairs, stood Tom Trainor and Marcellus Skinner, listening, since the workmen first went in, and Marcellus observed to his hopeful son:

"It's worked to a charm, Tom. They've gone in. Didn't any of 'em suspect anything?"

"Not a thing," returned Tom, with a grin.

"Locke he looked at the paper and saw the reg'lar heading, and I reckon they took it for a genuine message. Oh, he's sucked in, this time, for sure."

Marcellus, in the midst of the crowd, watched

the workmen go to the door of Room 17, and listened anxiously till the scuffling began, when he said to Tom with a chuckle.

"They're getting it, and he's getting wiped out. It's worked to a charm, Tommy boy. Let us get out of this, so no one can't say we'd nothen to do here."

And he started for the staircase with Tom, just as the crowd rushed toward Room 17, leaving the rest of the hall bare.

"Stop," whispered Tom, clutching his arm and pointing down-stairs. "There's that cussed Paul. Why didn't we have him up there, too, father?"

Old Skinner looked down and saw his nephew standing by the desk at the office, looking over the register as if searching for a name.

"Curse you," he muttered, shaking his fist furtively. "I wish I could get you up here into the fight. I'd get a chance at you."

At that moment the row in Room 17 became a regular free fight, and the trampling of feet, shouting and swearing, began to attract attention all over the hotel, in spite of the thick deafened floors and the buzz of the crowd.

The cry arose:

"Fight! fight!"

Then a man somewhere in the rear yelled:

"Fire! fire!"

Then came trampling feet rushing overhead and down-stairs, while the screams of women became audible.

Paul Van Beaver, at the desk, looking over the register, heard it and started round to listen.

The clerks behind the counter heard it too, and one hastily slammed the door of the safe and said to his colleague in a tone of excitement:

"Look out for things down here. The politicians have got to fighting, and there'll be a panic."

Then he darted away up-stairs, two steps at a time, and Paul was about to follow, when some one behind him said:

"Say, mister, for God's sake, listen to me."

Paul turned, and saw a ragged, sneaking-looking man, who continued nervously:

"I've been lookin' for ye all over. Larry wouldn't listen to me. Don't do the same. Before Heaven, I've got something to tell ye."

The noise up-stairs became louder, and the porters and waiters began to rush up to see what was the matter, as Paul said:

"Who are you? What do you want with me?"

"I'm Snoopey," returned the ragged man, in a low, hurried tone. "You're Mr. Van Beaver, ain't you?"

"Yes," replied Paul, puzzled. "But what do you want? Money?"

"Not a cent," said Snoopey, earnestly. "I want to tell yer suthin', mister. I heard it last night. There's a plot to kill you and Larry. I tried to tell him, but he wouldn't listen to me—"

The noise overhead was deafening now, and down came a waiter, running as hard as he could, yelling as he passed:

"Run! Run! They're killing people!"

Out of the door he ran, and they heard a great crash on the floor above.

The next moment Marcellus Skinner and Tom rushed down the stairs and dashed out; while a number of people made their appearance at the head of the broad staircase, struggling hard to keep from being pushed down, and a perfect tempest of shouts and curses could be heard on the landing.

Snoopey looked up, as if paralyzed with fear, and whispered to Paul:

"My God! We'll be killed here. Run! run!"

As he spoke, he clung to the young man's arm, and the next moment down the stairs rolled a living torrent of humanity, tripping and stumbling, to come sweeping along the corridor toward Paul and Snoopey.

The young man hurried out into the street just in time to escape being crushed, and the first person he saw was his uncle, looking very pale, while Tom Trainor stood beside him, trembling and appalled.

"Don't go near them," whispered Snoopey, hurrying him on. "Take me to some place where we kin talk quiet. I tell ye it will be worth money to ye."

Paul hesitated no longer. Something was going on which he did not understand, and Snoopey, whoever he was, held the key to it. He took Snoopey's arm and hurried the tramp off down a side street to Scriven's office, where he took him into the sanctum, locked the door and said:

"Now I'm ready to listen. Say what you've got to say, and be quick about it."

Thus urged, Snoopey told him, after a great deal of cross-questioning and explanation, a tale that astonished Paul immeasurably.

It seemed that the tramp, after hearing what he had heard the previous evening, at Skinner's house, had made his escape unseen, and had been hunting about ever since for one to whom he could tell his secret. He had not dared to go near Terror Jim, of whom he stood in mortal fear.

"He'd ha' got it out of me, sure, mister," he said. "You don't know Terror Jim. He'd ha' made me own up and go with him. But I give him the slip, and I seen him this mornin', with a lot of his pals, go into that very house where I found you."

"Into the Berkely!" said Paul, amazedly; "with a lot of tramps? They wouldn't let them in. You must be mistaken."

"I ain't," said Snoopey, earnestly. "I seen him and them, all dressed up in new cloze. They'd b'en shaved and cleaned up so one wouldn't know; but I know Terror Jim well enough."

Here their conference was interrupted by some one turning the handle of the door, and Paul opened it to admit Mr. Scriven, who said, in an astonished way:

"Hallo! what's this—what's this? Who's this man, Paul, and what's he doing here?"

Paul told him, and the old lawyer listened attentively till he had finished, when he said:

"If that's the case, we must hold this man fast. I just passed by the Berkely, and they've been killing people there. By the description you give, the party that began the fight can be spotted. Come along with me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE INQUEST WITHOUT A CORPSE.

A CROWD of people had gathered in the street before the Berkely Hotel, and a strong squad of policemen guarded the doors.

Every now and then an ambulance drove up and men came out with stretchers, some of them covered up with sheets, others carrying crushed and mutilated men, who groaned at every motion of their bearers.

The old lawyer, accompanied by Paul and Snoopey, the latter trembling in every limb and ashy pale, came to the door.

Mr. Scriven whispered something to the sergeant who commanded the men at the door, and he answered:

"Certainly, sir. We only want to keep out the roughs. These strikers are all round, and Mr. Skinner says they got up the row."

"Is he inside?—Skinner, I mean," asked Mr. Scriven; to which the sergeant replied:

"Yes, sir; he and several more."

"How did these people get hurt?" asked Paul Van Beaver, in a low tone, as a stretcher passed out.

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders.

"A panic, they say. I don't know. There was a fight up-stairs somewhere, and the politicians took a hand in. One man's dead, they say, and serves him right."

"Who's that?" asked Paul.

"A fellow they call the Man of Iron. He was a great fighter, but they've laid him out, I hear. The best of them catches it at last."

Mr. Scriven said no more, but beckoned to Paul, and they went in.

The sergeant looked hard at Snoopey.

"Is that fellow with you?" he asked.

"He's a witness," replied Scriven, gravely.

"I think we'll get at the bottom of this fight sooner than you expect, sergeant. Are there plenty of your men inside?"

"The captain's there with the whole reserve," answered the sergeant, who knew the old lawyer well; and then they went in, and Scriven said to Paul, quietly:

"Keep your witness in a quiet corner. I'll take a room, where we can lock him up till we want him. You can't trust those tramps. He may go back on you at the last moment."

He went to the desk, where the clerks, looking worried and excited, were trying to settle back to their work, and speedily engaged a room not far from the office, into which they got Snoopey without attracting much notice, locked him in, and then went up-stairs.

Here they were stopped by a policeman, but a few words in his ear made him say:

"All right, sir. The captain's out yonder in Room 17, with the coroner, trying to find out what began the muss."

Scriven led the way to Room 17, and found two more policemen at the door, while inside, the coroner sat at a table, with a hastily gathered jury on the other side, and several men were standing before him.

One of them was Marcellus Skinner, who was saying, as they approached:

"Yes, I recognize the body as that of a man called Locke—a desperate character. He was the leader of this strike, and has incited several riots already. He must have begun this one, and got the worst of it. I have known Mr. Somers many years, and I am sure his story can be depended on."

Paul looked into the room over the shoulders of the policemen, and saw, lying on the table, the figure of Larry Locke, the face all covered with blood; and he said, in a tone of horror:

"My God! The poor fellow's killed!"

His uncle heard his voice, and turned his head to favor him with a glance of great malignity; but Paul and Scriven walked into the room, and the old lawyer said to the coroner, who appeared to be surprised at the intrusion of strangers:

"Mr. Coroner, this gentleman has a witness

whose evidence may throw light on this question. Which is the man they call Somers?"

The coroner lifted his eyebrows.

"This gentleman is called Somers," he said, pointing to a large man who stood by Skinner. "He says that he was assaulted by this Locke, and struck him with a ruler in self-defense."

Scriven nodded absently.

"Ay, ay, so that's the man. Can we bring in our witness? I expect to prove that this poor fellow on the table was decoyed here by some pretext, on purpose to murder him in the crowd and confusion, and that the plot was made up last night by Mr. Skinner and this very man Somers, who is a tramp and thief."

Had a thunderbolt fallen the sensation could not have been greater.

The coroner stammered:

"Mr. Scriven, sir, consider. This is a very serious accusation—"

"I know it," returned the old lawyer, coolly. "But I'm prepared to prove it. Don't let them out. Look at their faces."

Marcellus Skinner and Somers, both deady pale, were staring open-mouthed at Scriven; but Skinner recovered himself enough to say, indignantly:

"It's a vile conspiracy, because I've taken away my business from him. Don't listen to him, Mr. Coroner."

"The law compels the gentleman to hear all witnesses," retorted Scriven, sharply. "You never took your business from me, sir, till I refused to join you in oppressing this poor fellow who lies dead there—"

"Don't say dead," interrupted Paul, who had been standing by the body on the table, unnoticed, while this went on. "Don't say dead. I can feel his pulse beating."

The coroner looked disgusted and the jury still more so, as well they might.

"What are you talking about, sir?" the coroner said tartly. "Are you a medical man?"

"No," responded Paul, as tartly; "but I can feel a pulse as well as any man. Where is your doctor? This man's not dead; he's only stunned."

"Go and call the surgeon," said the coroner, gruffly, to a policeman at the door, "and you, Mr. Scriven, bring up your witness and prove what you've said, if you can."

Here poor Larry on the table uttered a groan that set all doubts of his living condition at rest, and in a few minutes afterward the surgeon hurried in from his duties down-stairs, and after a short examination of Larry, observed, dryly:

"Head like an elephant. By Jove, the skull is not fractured, after all. He'll be sensible in a little while."

Paul uttered an exclamation of joy, and Skinner muttered a low curse, while Mr. Scriven said:

"So much the better. He can tell who was with him, and how this thing came about, or I'm very much mistaken."

In fact, it was not very long after when Larry opened his eyes, groaned, and said:

"Is that you, Mr. Paul? They double-banked me, at last, didn't they? But it took a dozen. Where's Maguire and Sutton?"

Paul assisted him to a sitting position, and he looked around the room, astonished, saying:

"What's happened? What's this?"

Scriven came close to him.

"We thought you were dead," he said. "My poor fellow, this is the coroner."

Larry smiled rather ruefully.

"He's very kind, I'm sure," said the Man of Iron; "but I ain't dead yet."

Then he glanced round the room, and a fierce frown rested on his face as he said, pointing at Somers:

"There's the son of a gun that double-banked me, and I can whip him any day."

As he spoke, he actually rose from the table, as strong as ever, and was going up to Somers, when the sharp captain of the police caught his arm, saying, sternly:

"That'll do; none of that. You're a good man, but you can't fight here."

Then the coroner, who seemed to be surprised beyond measure at the wonderful vitality of Larry, said to him:

"You're well named the Man of Iron. Tell me why you came here?"

"I came with Jim Maguire and Steve Sutton to see the secretary of the Bosses' Union," said Larry, boldly. "Here's their letter offering to end the strike."

And he rummaged in his pocket and brought it out, while Skinner and Somers looked on, too much confused at the miscarriage of their plan to interrupt.

"That feller said he was the secretary, and he give me sass, and set on me with a dozen more," continued Larry, angrily. "I'll not deny they double-banked me, Mr. Coroner, for they took me off my guard; but I'll say this: I'll take him and any two of his pals and they can't do it again now. I knocked two of 'em stiff afore I went down, as it was, and all I got was on the back of the head."

At this point of the story Mr. Scriven quietly slipped out of the room, and the coroner said:

"And you're sure you came here to meet the Employers' Union committee?"

"Sartain," responded Larry. "What else could bring me and my mates here? Where are they?"

"What names did you say?" asked the police captain.

"Jim Maguire and Steve Sutton. I hope they didn't get it as bad as I did, Cap."

The captain whispered something to the coroner, who left the room, when Skinner said:

"Well, I suppose there's no more necessity for my presence, is there?"

His tone was decidedly uneasy, but Somers instantly took alarm and growled:

"Yes, there is. Me and you's in the same boat. Stay here and see it out."

Skinner whispered to him, but the disguised tramp obstinately reiterated:

"I tell you we're in the same boat and we sink or swim together. None of your games, Cap Skinner. I've sailed with you afore."

The captain of police, who had taken charge on the departure of the useless coroner, listened to the amiable conversation and stared, for his esteemed friend Mr. Skinner was beginning to loom up on him in rather a dubious light.

"You can't leave the room till the examination is over," he said, awkwardly. "Of course, Mr. Skinner, nothing has appeared yet to implicate you in any way—"

"I should hope not," said Skinner, hastily. "I was on the outside stairs, with Mr. Trainor, when the affair began, and I ran into the street. I should like to know why I can't go out, captain."

"Well, you see, you're a witness, and it may be necessary to cross-examine you," said the captain, still more awkwardly. "As a favor to me, please remain, Mr. Skinner. We won't be very long now."

"But I've got business," objected Skinner. "If you want me you can send for me. I won't stay, unless I'm forced."

And he was walking toward the door when he was confronted by old Scriven, who walked in, leading a weazen-faced, ragged man, to whom he said:

"Is that the man?"

"Yes, boss," returned Snoopey, promptly, but very pale; "and yon's Terror Jim. Don't let him nigh me, boss, fur Godsake. Ho's a bad man, he is, a reg'lar terror."

"Who is this fellow?" asked the captain, amazed at the intrusion. "Is this your witness, Mr. Scriven?"

"Yes, sir," replied the lawyer, quietly; "and a very good witness, too. If you'll allow me to question him before you, you will admit that he knows a little of this affair."

Terror Jim was glaring at Snoopey like a tiger gloating over a lamb, and Snoopey kept his eyes carefully averted.

Skinner, on the other hand, was staring at the little tramp with an intent anxiety that showed that he had no idea what his evidence was going to be.

The captain hummed and hawed.

"That is a very unusual course, Mr. Scriven."

"I know it, sir, and I only do it to save you the trouble. I've been over the man's evidence. If you prefer it, I'll suggest the questions."

"No, no, no," returned the other, hastily. "It will save time. Go on, sir, go on."

Scriven took in his trembling witness and sat him down with his back to Terror Jim, remarking as he did so:

"I hope, captain, that this witness will be protected from browbeating. He is a man of timid temperament, and this man Somers has tyrannized over him for years."

"Certainly, certainly," answered the captain, and then the examination proceeded under old Scriven's skillful questioning, till Snoopey had pointed out Somers, in all his glory of new clothes and shaven face, as the tramp, Terror Jim, and added:

"Ef you want the names of the pals Terror Jim brought with him, I kin give you them; but for the Lordsake, gentlemen, hide me, so they won't see me."

"Why so?" asked the captain.

Snoopey shuddered violently.

"They'd kill me wherever they found me," he said in a low tone, at which Terror Jim laughed.

"And you'd better believe they'll do it anyhow, you, Snoopey," he said, with concentrated malignity. "I wouldn't be in your shoes when you go on the road next, Snoopey."

Snoopey tried to grin, but it was a sickly failure, till Scriven said:

"Much obliged to you, Somers, but we're not going to send this poor fellow adrift after he's told his story. He won't go on the road any more."

Snoopey seemed to be much comforted by the assurance; but he had not sufficient courage to meet the eyes of Terror Jim, who was at a white heat of anger at his former parasite, and looked as if he found it hard work to refrain from rushing at him on the spot.

But the old lawyer had laid his plan of action, and now he turned to the captain of police, who was beginning to look quite puzzled what to do, and observed to him:

"Of course this has been an informal affair all through. No one had any jurisdiction from

the beginning. The coroner certainly had not, because there was no body, and there is no magistrate here. But you are a police-officer, and as a citizen I demand the arrest of Mr. Skinner, here, on a conspiracy to kill, till he can be taken before a regular magistrate."

Skinner heard him and uttered a cry of rage: "Mel Commit me!"

"Yes, you and your friend, Somers' too," was the quiet reply. "Mind, captain, I make the charge, and you'll have to do your duty. The rest we can get hold of afterward; but here are the principals of the plot, and they are not going to get off so easy."

"Where is Van Slack?" cried the angry Skinner at once. "This is an outrage, captain. Are you going to take the word of this miserable tramp against mine? This is an outrage of the worst kind, and if you dare to arrest me, I'll make you sweat for false imprisonment."

The captain actually hesitated for a moment; for the influence of the rich ironmaster was not a thing that he dared lightly to go against; but he was also afraid of Scriven, whom he knew as an old and sharp lawyer. To please both parties, he said to Skinner:

"You know I can't help myself, Mr. Skinner. If this gentleman makes a charge, I'm bound to do my duty. If he can't prove it, you can sue him for false imprisonment, and get heavy damages; but I've got to arrest you on a charge like that."

Skinner bit his lips and eyed Paul Van Beaver savagely, saying:

"This is all your work, you sneaking hound. You think to bring me to terms by trumping up false charges against me, with that old pettifogger over there; but I'll be even with you yet. See if I don't." Then, to the captain, he said more coolly:

"I'm ready to go with you. Judge Roberts will settle this thing pretty darned quick. I charge this fellow, Locke, since they didn't kill him, with being the man who got up all this riot, and I demand that you take him into custody too. We'll see who comes out at the top of the heap yet. And when we've settled that, we'll try what a little charge of conspiracy against that interesting youth over there will do."

He indicated Paul with his finger as he spoke; but old Scriven said:

"That will be the best thing we can all do. There is no one here who can deal with this case according to law; and the sooner we get before some one who can, the better it will be for us. I like to see things done regular and ship-shape."

"Ay, ay," growled Skinner, bitterly. "I'll get you ship-shape before I have done with you."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE POWER OF CAPITAL.

As the ironmaster spoke, the captain of police laid his hand on his arm, saying coaxingly:

"Now, come, come, Mr. Skinner, this is all talk. Let's go along together. Do you insist on your charge against this man, Locke?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "And what's more, I demand that you put the irons on him. He's a desperate character as we all know."

"There is not the least necessity for that," interrupted Scriven. "I am his counsel, and I will be responsible that he comes along quietly. If you handcuff one, handcuff both."

The captain put an end to the discussion by taking Skinner by the arm and saying to his sergeant:

"See that the others are brought along quietly. Come, gentlemen."

And he left the building with Skinner, finding a great crowd at the entrance of the hotel in the street, composed mainly of workmen, who were staring at the front of the house, but quite silently.

When they saw the ironmaster coming out, arm in arm with the captain of police, they raised a murmur, but no demonstration other than this was made, for it was evident that they had not been fully informed of what had transpired in the hotel.

No one knew Terror Jim, and as for Paul and Larry, they had remained behind in the hotel with some officers, till Larry could pay a visit to the wash-room of the house, where he speedily removed from his face every trace of his late perilous experience.

Paul was amazed at the stoicism and endurance of the Man of Iron. In spite of a beating that would have laid up most men for weeks, he walked steadily to the wash-room, and when he had removed the blood from his face, no one would have known that he had been in a fight, but for the back of his head, which had to be ornamented by the police-surgeon with strips of plaster to prevent the blood from several cuts from oozing out again.

Larry looked at himself in the glass, and remarked with some pride:

"Not a one of 'em could hit me in the face, arter all, Mr. Paul. If I'd only known what was coming they wouldn't have done as much as they did. But I don't want Molly to hear of this, or she'll think I'm dead and some fool will be sure to go and tell her."

"I'll see that she is not needlessly alarmed,"

said Paul. "Now, the sooner we get to court and get your case dismissed, the better."

The policeman who had been attending them nodded to say he was ready, and they walked out of the hotel, Scriven having taken his departure, along with Skinner, to be on hand in court.

When they got to the doorway of the hotel they found the street full, as the others had done before them, but experienced a different reception.

No sooner did the form of Larry Locke make its appearance, his hat on the back of his head to conceal his injuries, while he walked arm in arm with Paul, than a tremendous cheer rung through the street and the workmen made a rush to the steps to shake his hand and congratulate him, while a dozen voices called out:

"Larry, boy, we heard ye was dead."

Larry, looking rather pale, now that his excitement had worn off, was yet able to answer:

"I'm worth a dozen dead men yet, boys."

Then the policeman with him whispered:

"Get them out of the way, and let's get to court."

But the men would not get out, and began to press on the policeman in a way that showed they suspected harm from his presence, while several voices cried:

"Larry Locke ain't done nothing. What's he arrested for?"

And as they all looked excited, the policeman drew out his club, and said to Paul, hurriedly:

"Call them men off, or there'll be a row, if I rap for help. We has our orders, and the rest are close by, you know."

In fact, Paul, looking back into the hotel, could see the hats of the reserve platoon coming that way, and saw that the least imprudence would bring on another fight, which might terminate fatally for several there.

"You must get them quiet," he said to Larry. "Why can't they be quiet, just as we are winning the game?"

Larry, who had been shaken more than he cared to show by the blows he had received, nevertheless had preserved his coolness, and made a peculiar signal with his hand, which procured instant silence.

Then he called out to the tumultuous crowd:

"Boys, I'm all right, and the strike will be over to-morrow. Kelly & Barr have left the Union, and open up to-morrow."

At this there was a tremendous shout; but it ceased the moment Larry signaled a second time, to say:

"And now, boys, I want you to go home. I've got to go to court to make a complaint against some men who assaulted me inside here. The policeman is with me to take care of me. The bosses had nothing to do with the assault, and my friend, Mr. Van Beaver, and myself are now going to court to secure the punishment of the men who did. What I want you all to do is to go home and keep out of the streets. In the morning the works will all open, with the exception of Skinner's. If he stands out another day, it will surprise me. Now please let us go on quietly, so that no one can say that American Knights of Labor behave badly. Good-day to you all."

The short address had an instant effect, and the men dispersed, cheering vigorously, while Larry and the policeman, with Paul by the side of the prisoner, walked away toward the court, followed by a crowd of men who seemed actuated by curiosity alone, for they kept at a little distance and behaved with perfect propriety.

In this way they arrived at the court-room, where Justice Roberts had been holding court ever since the strike had assumed an aspect that foreboded danger to the town.

They found the doors strongly guarded, and as soon as Larry and Paul had entered the building the police stopped any one from following them, handling their clubs in a menacing manner, that plainly showed they only wanted a chance to use them.

There was considerable grumbling at this; but the guardians of the gate were inexorable, and as Larry went up-stairs he observed to Paul, with some bitterness:

"That's about the justice a laboring man gets from the world in general. Here am I, half-killed by the men they hired to slug me, and they won't let my friends in, while you can bet the court-room will be full of old Skinner's people. Workingmen won't have their rights till they have a word to say to the courts as well as the richest boss in the land."

"But they have that now," said Paul gently, for the implied censure of Larry struck his sensibility as a lawyer, who believed in the supremacy of the law over every one. "The law knows no difference of persons, and you'll find that, you know, when we get into court."

Larry shook his head a little incredulously, but followed his friend into the court-room, where Paul was surprised to find, as Larry had predicted, quite a number of people whom he knew to be friends of the ironmaster, while Skinner himself was talking to the judge at the other end of the room.

Old Scriven was seated by a table looking over some law books, and as soon as Larry entered the court-room, Skinner left the judge, at

a word from the official, and went down below the bench, where he stood beside his lawyer, Van Slack, who looked foxy and sedate as usual, as if he had a sure case.

The policeman in charge of the Man of Iron left him and Paul as soon as he got to Scriven, who motioned the young man to a seat by him, while Mr. Van Slack instantly rose to his feet, cleared his throat, and looked expectantly at the judge, as if about to make an address of some sort.

Paul, a little puzzled at what he could possibly have to say in the face of such a plain case on conspiracy as that by which Larry had been trepanned, waited for the judge to open court.

Presently the magistrate—a solemn-looking personage—said:

"Now, brother Van Slack, we are ready to hear your complaint."

"Mr. Van Slack pointed to Larry Locke, who had just taken his seat, and began at once:

"May it please your Honor, my client, a well-known and highly respected citizen of this town carries on the business of steel-making according to the Bessemer process. He employs a large number of poor men who depend on him for their wages. These men have, until lately, been contented and happy, till the prisoner, Locke, came to this place and conspired, with some other people, to us unknown, to injure the business of my client. He entered the mill not three weeks ago with a mob of ruffians, and told Mr. Skinner that he must pay his men higher wages. On Mr. Skinner informing him that he was not in his employment, and therefore that he could not treat with him, this man Locke made a signal to the employees of Mr. Skinner, previously concerted with them, at which they all left the works, and when Mr. Skinner attempted to stop them, set on him and treated him with the grossest indignity at the instigation of this man Locke. Since that time, as we all know, the men of this town have been on strike, and although many of them are anxious to return to work, and have so stated, this man Locke has managed to deter them from so doing, and has incited them to violence. Therefore, your Honor, I move for his commitment on a charge of conspiracy to injure the business of my client, Mr. Skinner. That is to say, I give notice that I shall so move as soon as I have proved my charge by the proper witnesses."

The judge turned a sour countenance on Larry and asked him:

"Well, what have you got to say to all this?"

Larry was about to answer, when old Scriven pinched his arm, rose and said quietly:

"I appear for Mr. Locke, and demand an examination. We might waive it and elect to go before the Grand Jury on bail, but we prefer to meet the charge at once."

The judge leaned back in his chair with a weary air, saying:

"Bring on your witnesses, Mr. Van Slack. What do you wish to prove first?"

"First we intend to prove that the prisoner is one of the notorious ruffians called Knights of Labor, who have done so much mischief in the West, your Honor. Possibly brother Scriven is willing to admit that to save time."

He spoke sneeringly, but Scriven said:

"I'm not pressed for time. Call your witnesses. How are you going to prove that he is a Knight of Labor, and that the Knights are the ruffians you mention?"

Van Slack smiled derisively, and then called:

"John Sloman, come into court."

Larry started slightly, and ground his teeth as one of the men he had sworn into the Order since the strike had begun slouched into court, his head hanging down, and looking very much ashamed of himself, but still coming forward to the bench.

He was properly sworn, and testified that he had been admitted as a Knight of Labor on a certain night that week, and that the man who had occupied the master's chair and administered the obligation to him had been Larry Locke. Van Slack was going to question him as to the tenets of the Order, when Scriven interposed an objection by saying:

"Your Honor, I have not wanted to make any litigious opposition in this case, but we really are going too fast. We are putting the cart before the horse. They must, before they can do anything else, show that my client has injured their business. As for his affiliations with private societies, they have nothing to do with his case. I object to the further examination of this witness."

Mr. Van Slack rose to reply, with the usual sneer on his face.

"I expected this, your Honor, and have come prepared for it. I have proved by the witness that Locke is a member of this obnoxious—"

"I object to the counsel applying epithets not justified by the evidence," interrupted Scriven. "There is no proof that the Knights of Labor are anything more than a perfectly lawful and proper organization."

Van Slack smiled again, still more derisively.

"Exactly. They are angels of goodness, of course. How comes it, then, that the governor has had to call out troops to protect the peace of

this town on account of the menacing attitude of these same men. I submit, your Honor, that if I am not allowed to examine my own witness, we might as well surrender to these ruffians at once."

The judge had been listening to the colloquy silently; but his face showed which side he was on, as he said shortly:

"Objection disallowed. Go on, Mr. Van Slack."

"I except, your Honor," said Scriven; and then Van Slack pursued:

"Now, Mr. Sloman, please tell us, what are the objects of the Knights of Labor, as far as you know? What are they organized for?"

Sloman hesitated.

"Dunno as I oughter say, boss," he said. "We was sworn—"

"Ah, yes, a secret society," said the lawyer, quietly. "Then, if you were obliged to commit murder at the bidding of the Master Workman, you would not dare tell the court?"

"But we warn't sworn to do no sich thing, sir," said Sloman.

Here Larry whispered to Scriven, who rose, saying:

"There is no objection to the witness telling what he knows of the objects of the Knights, your Honor. There is no secrecy about them. We are ready to admit that their objects are to raise the condition of the workingmen of this country in the scale of civilization, and to enable them to live in greater comfort."

"And to foment strikes, I presume," said Van Slack, sneeringly.

Here the witness broke in:

"No sich thing, sir. We was warned to have nothing to do with any strike, unless it was ordered by the General Executive Board. The Order is dead ag'in' strikes, sir, as far as I know, and Mr. Locke knows that better'n I do."

Larry whispered again to Scriven, who said, shortly:

"Go ahead. It isn't legal; but you can't make anything of it."

Then Van Slack went on with his questioning, and managed to confuse the witness so that he admitted that Larry Locke, when the men were willing to give in, and go back on the old scale of wages, had been the one person who encouraged them to stand fast.

With this admission Van Slack closed, and Scriven began to cross-examine the reluctant Sloman.

"Who induced you to come here?" he asked, sternly.

Sloman looked puzzled, and the lawyer repeated the question in a different form, as he went on:

"I mean, who got you to come here to swear against Larry Locke? Did any one pay you for your trouble, and how much?"

He asked the question at random, but was surprised to see the confusion of the witness, who stammered:

"I don't want to swear ag'in' nobody. Mr. Skinner told me that—"

"I object," broke in Van Slack. "That's not evidence. We don't want to hear what any one told him."

"Well, then, how much did Mr. Skinner pay you?" asked Scriven, boldly, convinced, from the man's blunder, that there was something behind his confusion.

Sloman hesitated, but finally answered:

"He didn't pay me nothin', but he promised to make me a foreman if I'd tell the secrets of the Order; but I ain't done it yet."

This time it was Scriven's turn to smile, as he said softly:

"In-deed? So he promised to make you a foreman if you would sell out Larry Locke. I believe that you have taken an oath to keep sacred the secrets of the society to which you belong. How do you reconcile with your conscience your coming here to reveal things which you swore never to tell?"

The witness trembled violently and cast a frightened glance at Larry, who shook his head at Scriven, as if to warn him from going any further in that line. Scriven took the hint, saying:

"Well, never mind that. You admit you took the oath of secrecy, do you not? Did you, or did you not?"

Sloman shivered, as he said in a low voice:

"I did, but I ain't broke it yet."

"And so all you have told the court of the inside workings of the society you represent is not true?" asked Scriven, eying him closely.

"I hain't told no lies," said Sloman, doggedly; "but I hain't told no secrets I oughter to keep. Have I, Mr. Locke?"

In his innocence he appealed to Locke, who shook his head with a look of some scorn, as he answered, in defiance of all rules:

"No, no; you've told nothing."

"That will do for you, then," said Scriven, as he stepped down.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A LEGAL TILT.

MR. VAN SLACK consulted with his client a moment before he called another witness, while Scriven said to Paul in a whisper:

"Van Slack is getting bothered; but he knows he has the judge with him, and that is a good deal. He wants to discredit us before we make our complaint."

Presently Van Slack cleared his throat, and said:

"We have proved that the prisoner is a Knight of Labor, and that he has prevented men from going to work, who were quite willing to do so. The men he prevented from working were in the employment of my client, Mr. Skinner. I shall now call Mr. Skinner himself to the stand, to prove the damage he has sustained. Mr. Skinner, please take the witness-chair."

Skinner stepped up, stout and pompous, having quite recovered from the confusion and alarm he had felt when Snoopey had first been brought before the coroner. One reason of this was that the virtuous Snoopey had disappeared, and though Skinner felt somewhat uneasy about him, Van Slack had bolstered up his courage by telling him that the evidence of such a character would need a good deal of corroboration, before it could be received as credible.

So the ironmaster stepped into the chair, held up his hand and kissed the Bible, with a solemnity that was quite imposing, when his lawyer began to examine him.

He drew from him his name and age, and the position he had occupied in the mill since his father's death; found, for the benefit of the judge, that he was a church-warden of the richest church in the town, and showed, in his first questions, that Marcellus Skinner was a member of society who was universally respected.

Larry listened to the testimony with a bitter smile; but he was surprised that his lawyer made no objection to the lovely record Skinner was making for himself. At last he whispered:

"Why don't ye stop him telling those lies?"

Scriven smiled slightly, and returned:

"If you want to manage the case, try it. If not, let me alone."

And Larry had to sink back in his chair, and listen to the praises of Mr. Skinner, while the judge beamed on the rich man, and every now and then scowled at the poor one.

Presently Van Slack began to come to the history of the strike, and asked Skinner in his most insinuating manner:

"You know the prisoner, Locke?"

"I do. I have known him from a boy, to the time he left my works, after failing to make the men go on strike."

Scriven looked up, as if inclined to object, but thought better of it, and Skinner pursued, under the questions of his counsel:

"I discharged him from the works then, and he assaulted me and broke two of my ribs. By dint of bringing in a number of witnesses, who swore falsely that I struck him first, he got off the punishment he deserved for that; but when he came back and succeeded in getting my men to strike again, it was too much. Throughout the strike he has been the leader of the men, and when they set on me and nearly killed me, the day they went on strike, I saw Locke encouraging them to do their worst. To-day he came into the hotel, and got into a fight with some men, without any cause, and we all thought that he had been killed by them. It seems, however, that he got off. He is the man who has made all the trouble in this town; who set on the mob to destroy Kelly & Barr's mill, and who has done all he can to hurt the business on which our men live."

Then Van Slack gave up his witness, and Mr. Scriven rose, with his sweetest smile, to cross-examine, saying:

"Ah, Mr.—ah—Skinner—ah—I believe you are the son of the late Mr. Skinner, who founded the Eureka Mills. Are you not?"

"I am, sir," was the gruff reply, as Marcellus stared at him fixedly.

"Ah, yes. Well, will you be kind enough to tell us whether you are the sole owner of the mills at present?"

The judge pricked up his ears, and Skinner colored deeply as he replied, in his stiffest tones:

"I am the sole owner, sir. Do you doubt it?"

Scriven smiled, and dangled his glasses to and fro, as he said:

"You must not ask me questions. It is for me to ask, and you to answer. You say you are the sole owner. Do you mean absolutely? Are the mills yours, to buy or sell as you please?"

Skinner hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I don't want to sell them. As long as I live, they are mine."

"Answer my question, sir, and no more evasion!" thundered the lawyer, changing his manner entirely. "Are the mills yours to sell, if you please, or not? Remember, you are on oath."

Skinner turned purple, but remembering the facts in the possession of the old lawyer, he did not dare to lie, and said slowly:

"They are not, under the terms of my father's will. You know that."

"You mean to say, then, that you are what? A tenant for life of the mills, or what?"

"You might call it a tenant for life," was the reluctant admission of Skinner, at which the

countenance of the judge changed perceptibly, and he cleared his throat.

"And in case of the business being injured to such an extent that you would have to sell, to whom would the money belong?" asked Scriven.

Skinner hesitated, and at last said in a low voice:

"You ought to know. You drew the will."

Scriven smiled.

"That is not the question. His Honor the judge knows nothing of this, and I intend to get it in evidence that you are *not* the sole party in interest, and therefore are not damaged alone. Who is the person to whom the property reverts after your death?"

Van Slack jumped up excitedly:

"Your Honor, I move that all this be stricken out. It is entirely irrelevant to the case. We have proved injury at the hands of this Larry Locke; and my learned brother wants to show that some one else is injured too. I submit that this line of questions is entirely useless and frivolous."

The judge screwed up his face, saying:

"I think Brother Van Slack is right. What are you trying to get at, Mr. Scriven?"

Scriven answered at once:

"We intend to prove that this man Skinner, so far from being the virtuous character he represents himself to be, was, but a few years since, a tramp and a vagabond, who only succeeded in getting his father to forgive him by robbing his nephew, Mr. Paul Van Beaver, who is in court. We intend to prove that this accusation against Locke is part of a plan to forestall the evidence we are prepared to introduce, of a conspiracy on the part of this man Skinner and his accomplice, the man Somers, to murder Locke and Van Beaver together, in order that Skinner might be able to enjoy the estate, of which he is at present only the life tenant, in perpetuity. We intend to prove all this, sir, in due time, and I demand that we be allowed to prove it in our own way, according to the rules of evidence."

The judge screwed up his face as if he began to think differently of the case, as he said slowly:

"You are expecting to prove a good deal, it seems to me, Brother Scriven. As far as attacking the credibility of the witness is concerned, of course that is your right. Go on, but take care what you ask, and how you ask it."

Scriven, with a triumphant glance at Van Slack, continued:

"To whom does the mill property revert after your death?"

Skinner, thus cornered, answered:

"To my nephew, Paul Van Beaver."

"Is it not a fact that you cannot sell the mill property without his consent, and that, if it be sold, he is to receive half of the income out of the money?"

"It is," was the almost inaudible answer, accompanied by a glare at Paul, that bespoke his bitter hatred.

Scriven cleared his throat in his turn, and took a look at the notes he had prepared for the case.

"Then the worst injury that could occur to you, from the success of this strike, would be the compulsory sale of the mills; and you could not sell them without the consent of Mr. Van Beaver?"

Skinner gave an affirmative grunt, but said nothing more.

"Ah, yes, we are getting along very nicely, Mr. Skinner. Now, will you please tell the court whether you have, since the death of your father, contributed anything to the support of your nephew, Mr. Van Beaver, who is the reversionary owner of the mills?"

Van Slack rose again.

"I object, your Honor. That has nothing to do with the case, and no one knows that better than Brother Scriven. I confess I am quite surprised to hear an old practitioner like him indulge in such irrelevant questions, that he knows must be ruled out."

The judge nodded:

"Objection sustained."

Scriven, not in the least abashed, went on:

"In the event of your death, you have told us, your nephew inherits the property. In the event of his death, who would own it?"

"I should, absolutely. You know that as well as I. You drew the will."

"Exactly. In the event of Mr. Van Beaver's death, you would own the mill *absolutely*. His death would be an *advantage* to you?"

"No more than mine to him. We ain't either of us gushing over with love for each other. I suppose that's the reason he helped the strikers. He wants to force me to sell the mill."

Scriven let him go on, and then observed:

"I move to strike out all that part of the witness's answer that contains inferences, your Honor."

The judge nodded again:

"Struck out, of course."

Then, to Skinner, with a little less affection than he had hitherto shown, he said shortly:

"Answer the questions directly, and don't wander to other things."

Skinner turned a shade redder at the tone of the judge, but made no reply; while Scriven went on, in his smoothest manner, the iron-

master watching him keenly, and evidently setting his wits to work against those of the old lawyer.

"Mr. Skinner," pursued Scriven, "please to tell the court whether the wages paid by you to your men, at the time the strike occurred, are the same as are paid in other places, where iron-founding is a business?"

Skinner scowled at him, as he replied sullenly:

"I'm paying the same as every one else in the town."

"In the town. But is it not a fact that, in Ohio, they are paying higher wages than you were giving when the strike occurred?"

"I don't know anything about it," was the irritable reply. "If they want to get them high wages you tell of, why don't they go to Ohio? I ain't hindering them."

"Exactly. Now, sir, please tell the court whether you are paying the men in your factory or mill the same wages as you were paying three months ago or not? I want a direct answer."

"No, I ain't; and what's more I ain't a-going to," snapped out Skinner.

"Is it not a fact that, since you have acquired control of the mill, you have reduced wages twenty-five per cent.?" pursued the old lawyer, eying his witness narrowly.

"Yes, it is, and I'm going to stick to it," said Skinner savagely. "I told them we were losing money at the old scale, and they all agreed to come down to the new. I gave them their choice between that, and shutting down the mill."

"Did all of your hands accept the reduction?"

"Yes, they did, and that's what riles me now, to have them go back on their words."

Skinner straightened up as he spoke, and looked as virtuously indignant as he could, while the judge blew his nose, to conceal any interest he might feel in the case.

"Did all the men accept the reduction?" pursued Scriven insinuatingly. "Remember that you are on oath, sir, and tell the exact truth. Did all the men in your works, *without exception*, take the lower wages or not? I want a direct, *truthful* answer."

Skinner wriggled in his chair, and then rapped out:

"Yes, they did. All but the cranemen, under that Larry Locke. Now you've got it, and what do you make of it?"

Scriven cast a glance, at the judge to see what he thought of the matter; but the official's face was inscrutable, and the old lawyer went on, in the same insinuating manner as before:

"Exactly. The cranemen *refused* to take the lower wages. How many of them were there, as near as you remember?"

"Maybe a dozen; maybe less. Couldn't say."

"And those cranemen; you paid them the *old rate* of wages, I presume, and are still paying them."

"No such thing. I bounced the whole lot, and got new men in their places. There isn't one of them here but that fellow, Locke."

"And as a matter of fact, all that the men in your employment are now striking for, is to get the same rate of wages they were receiving when you cut them down?"

Scriven put the matter in this shape on purpose; and Skinner saw the point and attempted to explain, but the old lawyer cut him off.

"Answer my question, yes or no, and remember you are on oath."

"Yes, then," was Skinner's reply.

Then Scriven turned to the judge, and said quietly:

"Your Honor, on the admission of Mr. Skinner, the men on strike are only trying to get back the wages they have always received, till Mr. Skinner himself cut them down. I submit that, on his own showing, they are engaged in a perfectly lawful and reasonable action, and that the charge of conspiracy to destroy his business cannot lie! I move to dismiss the complaint."

The judge hummed and hawed a little.

"I hardly think it would be fair to dismiss the complaint at this stage of the case. The plaintiff may be able to prove that the defendant committed acts of violence that injured him, though the combination of men may have been made for a lawful purpose. Let Mr. Van Slack go on, and bring any other witnesses he may have, to prove a conspiracy to injure."

Van Slack, looking rather less confident than he had done, told the ironmaster to step down, when Larry whispered to Scriven:

"Ain't you going to make him tell anything more about double-banking me, and all the rest of it?"

Scriven shook his head.

"All in good time," was all the answer that he deigned to the impatient Man of Iron. Paul Van Beaver got close to Larry and pinched his arm, whispering:

"Leave it all to Mr. Scriven. He understands the case perfectly."

And it seemed that he did, for Van Slack had to hold quite a long conversation with his client, in a whisper before he called the next witness. When he uttered the name "James Somers," even Paul was surprised, for he had never

thought that the lawyer would dare to call a man of such notorious character.

But Van Slack was bound to get in Terror Jim's evidence before it could be discredited by the charge which he knew was going to be brought against him as soon as the first case was over; and the ex-tramp stepped to the witness-chair, looking respectable in his new clothes, and his recently shaved face, and took the oath.

He announced his name and said that his occupation was that of a seaman. That he had known the plaintiff many years ago, when they were both in the merchant service, and had recently renewed the acquaintance. That he had been in the Berkely House that morning, when Larry Locke had entered, with a gang of men, and had assaulted him without any provocation, save that he was a friend of what Larry had called "the bosses." That he had tried to keep from a fight, but that, when Larry assaulted him, he had been compelled to take up a ruler in self-defense, and had knocked the man down. That he had been in a crowd the day before, when he had heard Larry inciting the men on strike to burn the mills of Kelly & Barr, and especially that he had heard him tell them to look for Marcellus Skinner and to "lay him out."

All this Mr. Somers swore to, with the most refreshing coolness, and Scriven interposed no objection, while Larry fidgeted on his seat, as the stream of lies flowed on, and was very nearly interfering once or twice, in his anger, at the falsehoods told.

Paul managed to keep him quiet till Scriven arose to cross-examine, and the old lawyer began at once.

"You say your name is Somers. Did you ever have another name?"

The tramp fidgeted uneasily in his seat, and growled out:

"Not as I knows on. People may have given me nick-names. I ain't to blame for that, am I?"

And what was the particular nick-name that people gave you, if you have no objection to telling the court?"

Terror Jim lifted his head with some pride.

"Some calls me Terror Jim, and others the Smasher. But I never took no other name than Somers myself."

"And why did they call you Terror Jim?"

"Because they were afraid of you, or because you were afraid of them?"

The ex-tramp laughed.

"Cause they was afeard of *me* in course. I never seen the man I turned my back on."

"Did you get that name on ship-board, or on shore?"

Jim cast a surly glance at the other, as he growled:

"Ashore."

"And what do you do for a living ashore? Please tell the court."

"Sometimes one thing; sometimes another. Whatever I kin git to do."

"Is it not a fact that you are a tramp and a vagabond, who has no visible means of subsistence?"

"No, it ain't. I'm in Mr. Skinner's employment; and I'm an honest man, and just as respectable as you are."

"How long have you been in Mr. Skinner's employment?"

"Couldn't say. Some years."

"Oh, some years. When he first took you into his employment, was he the owner of the mills he now works?"

"In course he was. What d'ye take me for?"

"Are you aware that Mr. Skinner has only had those mills for about six months? Are you *sure* that you have been in his employment for more than a year?"

Jim saw that he had made a mistake, and began to hedge.

"I don't know nothen about that. I allers thought he owned the mills. Maybe he didn't. Anyway, I'm in his employment, *now*."

"Since when?"

"Told ye I didn't know. Some years."

"Then, during the time you have been in his employment, he has become owner of the mills?"

"I s'pose so. I don't know nothen about that."

"Now, Mr. Somers, when did you come to Holesburg?"

Taken unawarily, Jim replied at a venture.

"Three weeks ago, I guess."

"Where have you been since then?"

"With Mr. Skinner."

"Do you know a man called Snoopey? That is to say, that is the nick-name he goes by, among his friends; but his real name is Thomas Bradley. Do you know the man?"

Jim scowled at his questioner. He had been warned to deny all knowledge of Snoopey, but hardly knew how much the lawyer knew about his past. At last, with something of an effort, he said:

"No, I don't know the man. Never heard of him."

"Very good. Do you know Larry Locke here?"

"Sartin I do."

"When did you make his acquaintance?" Jim hesitated a moment, and then said: "I seen him first here, among the men, since the strike began. Mr. Skinner pointed him out to me. That's the man, there."

"Are you sure you never saw him before?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

COMING TO THE POINT.

TERROR JIM fidgeted in his chair more than he had done hitherto; for Larry had half-risen from his seat and was staring at the ex-tramp in a manner that made him feel decidedly uncomfortable. He had certain memories of Larry that were not pleasant, and he could not meet his eye without blenching. But he remembered his instructions from Van Slack, hardened his heart, and replied boldly:

"Never seen the man, till Mr. Skinner pointed him out to me."

"And when was that?"

"Bout a week ago."

"That will do, Mr. Somers. You can step down."

Terror Jim, with a great feeling of relief, stepped down from the chair, and Scriven nodded to Van Slack, saying:

"Go on and prove your case, as soon as you please."

But Van Slack only answered:

"We rest here. We have proved attempts at malicious mischief by the witness who has just stepped down. That is our case."

"Then I move that it be dismissed," said Scriven to the judge, who shook his head with the observation:

"I shall hold the prisoner, unless you can show something on the other side. The attempt to excite violence has been sworn to. If you can disprove it, go ahead and do it. But you may be sure that I shall not strain a point to favor any of these strikers, who have brought our town into such distress and disrepute. Go on, sir."

Mr. Scriven bowed politely.

"I have not asked your Honor to stretch any points in our favor, and I shall not do so. I only insist on our rights under the law, which is no respecter of persons. As I understand your Honor, all we have to do is to overthrow the testimony of the witness Somers, and Skinner."

The judge nodded.

"Certainly. That is as explicit as can be. Upset that, and I'll be glad to hear you on your motion; but till then, I shall hold the prisoner Locke on the charge."

And it was easy to see, from his tone and manner, that he meant to hold him, if there was a possibility of so doing, so intensely was he prejudiced against the strikers, in common with the authorities of the town, under the efforts of the Ironmasters' Union, which represented so much capital.

Scriven beckoned to Larry Locke to take the stand, and when the young man had been sworn, and had given his name and occupation, he extracted from him a short history of his movements since he had left Holesburg, three months before. By a few questions, to which Van Slack could not object, he extracted from him the nature of his acquaintance with Terror Jim, and the manner in which he had entered the mills years before after fighting Tom Trainor for his chance.

"And now, Mr. Locke," said his counsel, "please tell the court what you know of this man, Somers, since you first made his acquaintance? I mean what have you seen of him, since the reduction in wages, to which Mr. Skinner has testified?"

"Well, sir, on the night that I was arrested for hitting Mr. Skinner, Terror Jim was put into the same cell with me in the station-house, and tried to pick a quarrel with me. Finally he hit me, and I had to lay him out in the cell. I guess I must have broken his nose, for you see it's all crooked now."

"Exactly. Can you tell us anything else about him, after that night? I mean, have you ever seen him since till to-day?"

"I saw him in Ohio, a few miles from the city of Cincinnati, when he and his pal, Snoopey, were asleep by the side of the road, sir. I was footing it to Cincinnati to get work, and found them there."

"And what transpired then?"

"Well, I just waked them up, and asked them what they had done with my money. That's all, sir."

The judge interrupted angrily:

"Tut, tut, tut! what money? What money are you talking of?"

Larry looked up at him.

"The money Snoopey stole from my house, sir. While I was in the cell, he went to my house and stole seven hundred dollars that my wife had hidden in a mattress to pay our mortgage to Mr. Briggs. I taxed them both with it, and they owned up and begged hard that I wouldn't kill them. I was mad enough to do it; but as all the money was gone I let them go, and never saw that Jim again till to-day."

The judge looked at Van Slack, as if he expected an objection to all this; but the lawyer was whispering to Skinner, and did not say anything.

Scriven continued his questions, and elicited from Larry the facts as to Jim's trampship and thefts, and the relation that Snoopey held toward him. Scriven then turned his witness over to the tender mercies of the other lawyer, who proceeded in this wise:

"Ah! and so your name is Locke, is it?"

"That's what I've allers been called, sir."

"Have you any right to the name?"

Larry stared and colored deeply.

"I was always called by it since I remember, sir."

"Ah, yes. Where were you born?"

Larry colored still more deeply.

"I don't know, sir. I was brought up in the children's asylum in the county of Bucks. That's all I know. The asylum people gave me my name, and I've never been ashamed of it."

"Oh, so you are an asylum boy, are you? Well, we won't go any further into that question. You say that, when you met the witness Somers in Ohio, you tried to rob him of his money?"

"I never said no such thing. I said that I tried to get him to give me back mine, sir."

"And what made you think he had your money?"

"Because he owned up that Snoopey took it, and that he and his pal had spent it all on a big drunk."

Van Slack coughed.

"And that is all the reason you had for thinking it? Did you see this Snoopey, you speak of, take the money?"

"No, sir. If I had, he would never have got off alive. The skunk waited till I got off, before he dared to come round the house."

"Then what had Somers to do with it? You say he was with you in the cell. He could not have robbed you."

"He was Snoopey's pal, and they divided on it," said Larry, firmly. "I know it, because they owned up to it before I let them go."

"Are you sure that they did not own up to anything you wisked, just because they were afraid of you and your club? You had a club, I believe; didn't you?"

Larry admitted that such might have been the case, but added:

"But I know that they robbed me, because no one else knew the money was hidden there. Snoopey told me that he saw my wife hiding some of it in the mattress, and that was why he hung round there after I was gone."

"Ah, yes, so that is only what you think, and what Snoopey told you? Where is this Snoopey now?"

Larry smiled rather scornfully, as he replied:

"You must ask some one else. I don't know."

"Will you swear that you don't know, on your oath?"

"I do, sir."

The positive answer provoked Van Slack, who imagined that Larry must know all about Snoopey, and who was unaware of the fact that Scriven had taken charge of the interesting tramp, who was at that moment in charge of the old lawyer's clerks, ready to be produced.

Van Slack, after several efforts to make Larry admit that he knew where Snoopey was, began to cross-examine him in a savage manner on the subject of the strike, eliciting his opinions, which were, as he had suspected, very radical, as to the rights of workingmen. Larry did not pretend to deny that he had organized the strike, and that he had sustained it to the end, being helped by contributions from the Order in other places. In the hope of entrapping him into some indiscreet admissions, Van Slack affected to share his sentiments, and tried to make him say that he believed in violence, if the men could not get their rights or higher way.

But Larry, who was quite cool throughout the examination, was not to be caught in any such way, till the lawyer asked him:

"Now, Mr. Locke, I want you to answer this question. Supposing you were heading a strike, and you had, among the bosses on the other side, a timid man, who would yield to threats of violence, would you not feel justified in employing them?"

"No, sir, I should not; for the reason that a man who gives in for a scare is sure to cheat you when he gets the chance."

"Ah! then it is only for the sake of the future that you refrain from violence? Is that it?"

"No such thing, sir. Besides that, when workingmen take to violence, the bosses are sure to send for the soldiers, and that has a bad effect on the strike. They have done it here, on purpose to make the people think we wanted to destroy things, when they all know that we put guards on Kelly & Barr's place to keep thieves from getting in, and gave up to Mr. Kelly's men the moment they wanted to take charge of the place."

"Then do you mean to say that there was no injury done to the shop of Kelly & Barr, the other day? I heard the place was gutted."

"It was not any such thing, sir. There were a few windows broken at the first, when the bosses, after sending for us, told us they would

not treat with the Knights. But we stopped that at once, and the Knights have offered to pay for the damage done. Kelly & Barr are going to open their mill to-morrow, and they have given in to the old scale, so that the strike is almost over."

Van Slack, thus repulsed, went on a new tack, saying:

"And this old scale you speak of, to whom will it be given?"

"To any man that chooses to work under it, sir."

"You mean, to any man that belongs to your Order?"

"I mean, to any man that goes to work there."

"Then have you made no stipulation as to the employment of Knights of Labor? I thought that your Order always frowned on any man that did not choose to belong to it."

Larry smiled scornfully.

"If they don't choose to belong to the order, it's their own loss. We fight for all workingmen. If a man chooses to fight us, we fight him just as your bosses do. But if he just attends to his own business, we leave him alone. He gets the benefit of other men's work; but we are quite willing for him to do that, if he does not call on us to help him. Where were the workingmen before they began to organize? The bosses had them where they wanted them, to work for whatever they chose to give them. Where are they now? They are beginning to be their own masters, and the time will come when they know their power, that they will rule this land."

Van Slack listened to him, smiling and rubbing his hands as he answered him slowly, looking at the judge meanwhile:

"Very pretty sentiments, on my word! So it seems you are a socialist? Very likely you believe in dynamite, to blow up the bosses, if they don't give you the wages you want?"

Larry smiled still more scornfully.

"Dynamite indeed! Where would we be if we blew up the mills? Where would we get work to do to keep our families? No, sir; as long as you let the workingmen organize you can find no safer members of society. I can tell you that. We make things, we don't destroy them. But it seems to me that you're getting into things that don't belong to this case."

"Have you just found that out?" inquired the voice of old Scriven, in his driest tones. "Now, your Honor, you have given my learned brother all the latitude he can possibly ask for in his cross-examination, and I would like to suggest that, hereafter, you hold him down to the case. Mr. Locke's private opinions have nothing to do with the accusation that he has injured Mr. Skinner's business."

"Oh, well, you can let him stand down," said Van Slack, shrugging his shoulders. "I've got all I want out of him. He's evidently a regular demagogue. You can get down, Locke."

And Larry stood down, feeling in some vague way that he had injured his own cause unwittingly, and that he had been a fool to measure wits with a lawyer, who was practiced at that sort of thing.

Then Van Slack looked at Scriven sarcastically, asking him:

"Well, have you any more witnesses that you would like to examine, or do you still wish to dismiss this complaint?"

"Just to oblige you I'll call Thomas Bradley," said Scriven in the same sour tone as that used by his opponent. "Mr. Van Beaver, will you be kind enough to send for him?"

Paul rose and went out, while Van Slack and his partner held a hurried consultation as to what would be best to do with Snoopey when he came to give his testimony. Finally the lawyer concluded to let him be examined, and try to break him down on the cross-examination, when he should have told his story. It was was the only hope of the prosecution.

Paul soon returned with Snoopey, who had been taken to a barber while the other witnesses were being examined, and rigged up in a new suit of cheap clothes, in which he presented as different a figure from his old self, as Somers had shown after his transformation by similar means.

The effect of new clothes and a good meal, on the courage of the formerly craven Snoopey, had been favorable; and he had been assured that he would be preserved from harm in any event, if he told the full truth. Though he avoided the eye of his old tyrant, Terror Jim, he seemed to have no special fears of any one else; and looked up at the judge and then at Van Slack, as if he rather enjoyed the prospect of being examined. The fact was that Snoopey, like many men who are physically timid, was disposed to be exceedingly impudent when he felt that his bones were safe. The only way to govern such natures as his, lies through physical fear; and this truth had been early recognized by Terror Jim, who had brought his parasite down to a condition of abject obedience, through the aid of many a brutal beating.

As soon as Snoopey crept into court, the other tramp tried his best to catch his eye, for the purpose of overawing him; but Snoopey

would not meet it, and was put on the stand and duly sworn in.

He deposed that his name was Thomas Bradley; his occupation that of a tailor, but admitted that he had lived as a tramp for many years. Then he was asked if he knew Mr. Skinner, the ironmaster.

"Don't know as I do, boss," he said. "I ain't much on names."

"Well, you see that gentleman here, on the other side of the table. Have you ever seen him before or not?"

Snoopey grinned as he looked at Skinner.

"Oh, yes, boss, I know him well enough. Don't know his name, but I know the man well enough."

"When did you first see him, and where?"

"Seen him at his own house last night, sir."

The judge looked surprised, but Van Slack gave him a glance that said as plain as looks could speak: "Wait till I get at him."

"Tell the story of how you saw him in your own words," said the old lawyer, looking up at the ceiling in an absent-minded manner.

Snoopey began rather awkwardly, but warmed up as he proceeded.

"Well, boss, ye see, me and Terror Jim, there, was old pals, and he allowed as how he knowed this man, Skinner, as ye call him, and that he was going in to see him, and strike him for suthin'. And he give me orders to wait outside while he went in. In course I thought he was just a-coddin' me; but, sure enough, he went right straight to the house, and I seen the other man come out to him and take him up-stairs. And then the waiter-fellers in the house, they got out, and I thinks to myself there warn't no use in my stayin' out while Jim was a-gittin' his insides filled. So I slips in at a rear winder and hides in the dinin'-room under a table, where the gent was kind enough to leave quite a big chicken, which I took under the table with me."

"Well, go on. What next?" said Scriven impatiently.

"Well, boss, as I was munchin' away under the table, who should come in but Terror Jim, all dressed up, as ye see him to-day, along with the other gent, and they sits down and begins to eat. That is, Jim did the eatin', and the other feller did the talkin'. Then it come out how Jim and him had b'en old friends when they was sailors somewhere, and how they'd poisoned the captain and mate of some ship called the Aurora, and how Mr. Skinner here was afraid that Jim was going to split on him about it. And then Jim he struck hard for stamps; but the other gent he wouldn't let him have a cent except he'd promise to do some work for him."

"And what work was that? Did he offer him a place in his mill?"

Snoopey grinned.

"Yes, he did that at first; but Jim he kinder allowed that he didn't want no work nohow; and I reckon he was right, gents. I ain't hankerin' arter that myself. What he wanted, he said, was money, and he warn't the man to work for it, nuther; though he hadn't no objections to fight for it. And then the boss he asked him if he was willin' to take a fightin' job, to lay out a man; and arter some bargainin', Jim he agreed to do it."

"You mean that he agreed to murder some one?" asked Scriven, when Van Slack jumped up.

"I object. He can't put words into the witness's mouth. Let him stick to the rules of evidence."

"Very well, then, to oblige you I'll put the question in another form. Bradley, you say that Terror Jim—by the by, who is Terror Jim, please? Is he present in court?"

Snoopey turned with a visible effort, and pointed to his old partner, saying in a low voice:

"That's the man, gents. Him and me has been on many a tramp together; and I wouldn't have gone back on him, if he hadn't wanted to get us both into a hangin' scrape."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, boss, that it was all agreed 'twixt him and Mr. Skinner, that gent over there, that Jim was to lay for a man called Larry Locke, and another called Paul Van Beaver; and that I was to do the spyin' for 'em, and git them to come to some place, after dark, when Jim, and some pals he agreed to git, was to lay them both out stiff."

"And what do you mean by laying them out stiff?"

"Why, killin' them, of course, boss."

"Then you mean to say that you heard a plot between Terror Jim and Mr. Skinner, to kill Paul Van Beaver and Larry Locke. Is that it?"

This time Van Slack did not object. On the contrary, he looked as if he was decidedly sick of his case, and when his client whispered to him something on the subject, he snapped:

"It's no use. Let him tell his story."

Snoopey answered slowly and distinctly:

"That's just what it was, boss, and Jim he said as how I was a good feller to spy, if I got licked once or twice a week reg'lar. But he don't git no chance to lick me no more, if you sticks to me, boss."

"That is all, your Honor. My learned

brother can take the witness, and pick all the holes he likes," remarked Scriven. "When he is through I shall move to dismiss the complaint, and the committal of Skinner and Somers for conspiracy."

Up jumped Mr. Van Slack viciously, and tried his best to shake the story that Snoopey had just told. He questioned him about his past career, and the robbery he had committed, tried to make him say that he was mistaken as to the things he had heard under Skinner's table, but failed to shake Snoopey in the least. On the contrary, the tramp got more and more impudent in his replies, and finally gave the names of all of the men whom Terror Jim had hired to aid him in the plot, that had so nearly succeeded in compassing Larry's death. When it was over at last, the judge had no resource but to accede to Scriven's motion to dismiss the complaint, and he did so.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

THE dismissal of the complaint was followed by a spirited fight between Scriven and Van Slack as to whether Somers and Skinner should be committed, then and there, for their conspiracy to murder Larry and Paul; the said conspiracy having gone into effect as far as regards only one of the parties.

Finally the judge announced that he would hold both men to answer; the iron-master in a nominal sum, "as there was no danger of his trying to escape," while the tramp, as a stranger, would require the sum of a thousand dollars bail.

This opened the eyes of Terror Jim, who began to beg his partner in sin to bail him out; but, somewhat to the surprise of Scriven, the ironmaster refused to do any such thing, and told his accomplice, in open court, that "he had nothing more to do with him." For his own part he denied having given any such instructions as those reported by Snoopey; and Van Slack made a fiery speech, in which he said that "it was plain the two tramps had got up a plot to bring discredit on Mr. Skinner, by getting up the story between them."

Larry listened to the skirmish as if much puzzled at the way in which the judge took the part of Skinner, or at least seemed to do so; but when it was over, he had the mortification of seeing Skinner walk out of court a free man, to all appearance, while Somers and Snoopey were taken off by officers; the first as a prisoner, the last to be detained as a witness.

His only consolation lay in the fact that he was not put under bonds himself; but even this was somewhat dampened when Skinner, as he walked out of court, said to the young workman, in a low, malignant tone, that showed he wished to provoke him:

"Think ye did a heap, didn't ye? But this fight ain't over yet, Larry Locke, and don't you forget it. You hain't got to the bottom of my purse yet, and afore you're a day older you'll know it."

Larry made no answer to him; for he perceived that the ironmaster, for some reason, wished to provoke him into an angry retort. He had just got through one fight, and the courtroom was full of well-dressed people, who seemed to be friends of Skinner, from the way in which they crowded round him as he went out, speaking in loud tones of the "infamous conspiracy," that they seemed to be convinced had been set up between two tramps and the strikers, to injure the character of a respectable man like himself.

Old Scriven, being a lawyer, did not seem to be blamed by the friends of the ironmaster, though one or two observed that "they thought he might be in a better business than bolstering up a lot of Anarchists and dynamiters."

But Scriven noticed none of them; packed up his papers and books, and took his way to the office, where Paul followed him, having seen Larry on his way to his own home in a triumphant procession of the strikers, who had waited outside of the courtroom to welcome him.

Once in the office, the old lawyer entered into a long and secret consultation with Paul, as to their future proceedings in the case, the outcome of which will appear a little later.

As for Larry, he went home and found his wife waiting for him, her face pale and anxious, for she had been frightened by all sorts of contradictory reports as to her husband's safety.

"Oh, Larry, boy," she said, as she hugged him vigorously, "I've been scared out of my life about ye. First they said ye was killed, and then they said they'd seen ye alive, and if ye hadn't come when ye did, I believe I should have come after ye."

"Glad ye didn't," said Larry, soberly. "Them courts ain't fitting places for women to go to, and I tell ye a working man don't git much show in them, if the judge sees a chance to take it away."

"But what chance could the judge have to do anything to you, Larry, boy, when ye haven't done nothing against the law, and stopped all the fighting and thieving. Why, the men are going to work at Kelly & Barr's mill already, and—"

Larry, who had been rubbing his head rather

gloomily over the thought of his troubles, here looked up quickly, asking:

"What's that you say? Kelly & Barr starting up the works again?"

"Why, yes," was the surprised reply. "Didn't you know it? I thought you must have been the man set them going. They started work at noon, and they're at it now."

Larry jumped up at once, and resumed the coat he had laid off.

"There's some shennannigan going on," he said. "They haven't made any agreement with our assembly, and the strike isn't over till they do."

He was just going out of the door when Molly asked him anxiously:

"But what's the harm if the men are at work, Larry? You ain't going to stop them again, are you? Why, they wouldn't do it for you."

Larry looked back at her long enough to say:

"You don't know the ways of the bosses as well as I do. If they don't sign an agreement, there is nothing in the world to keep them from cutting down the scale next week if they please; and a new strike won't be easy to organize."

And away he went toward Holesburg, at a rapid walk, till he came near the great mill of Kelly & Barr, where, sure enough, the huge chimney was already belching forth its clouds of smoke, while a crowd of curious workmen were hanging round outside; and inside the works everything was going on as if nothing had occurred to stop them.

Larry recognized the men outside as belonging to other mills, and asked them how Kelly & Barr had come to open up. They all looked puzzled and unable to give him an explanation; but as he walked in, he noticed that the men at work avoided his eye and seemed a little ashamed of themselves. Poor fellows, hungry and ragged, with their families clamoring for money, they had given in to the offer of the rich Kelly, whom Larry could see, sitting at his desk in the office, with his old pompous air, as if he owned the whole world, while the men who had occasion to go in did so in their old style, with their hats in their hands, and the timid cringing air which had always belonged to the employees of the rich ironmaster.

Larry stopped one man, who was wheeling a barrow toward the mouth of the furnace, and asked him quietly:

"Who sent you to work? Has any one declared the strike off? If so, who did it?"

The man looked doggedly at the barrow, saying sullenly:

"I don't know, unless it was Kelly himself. He sent round word to us to come to work on the old scale, and he would give us half a day extra, if we would get the furnace going before night. What's a man to do? My children are starving, and the Knights ain't give me more'n enough to buy food for half of them."

"And so, to get a week's wages this week, you are willing to go back, without any security that Kelly won't cut you down to the low scale the week after," said Larry, severely. "Oh, you men, you men! when will you learn that, when a fight is on, the man that sticks to the end is the one that wins? Now, you just listen to me one moment. John Sliney, I'm going into the office to see Kelly, and if this thing isn't all right, I'm going to give the signal to stop work. You refuse to obey it, and you know what becomes of you as a Knight of Labor."

Sliney hung his head as he replied:

"We ain't said we was going back on the Knights; but the boys they allowed that old Skinner got the best of you in court—"

"Who told you that?" asked Larry, angrily. "That is some lie of that traitor, Sloman, who came into court prepared to give away all our secrets, but didn't dare to when my eye was on him. Spread the word among the boys that the strike isn't over yet, and won't be till I give the word. I'm Master Workman here, and I'm bound to take care that the bosses don't cheat you while I'm around."

He walked straight to the office, where he found Mr. Kelly, with his back to the door, swinging on his turning-chair and looking as lordly as ever. He pretended not to see the Master Workman as he entered the room; but Larry marched straight up to him, and laid his broad hand on the shoulder of the rich man, saying:

"Mr. Kelly, a word with you."

Kelly looked round, and the usually pompous look departed from his face, to be replaced by a charming but exceedingly insincere smile, as he said:

"Why, Mr. Locke, is it you?"

"Yes, it is," was the dry reply. "I see you've got your men at work again. How is that, sir?"

Kelly smiled still more graciously, as he replied:

"Why, simply enough. I own the works, and I've set them going again."

"And what wages are you paying the men?" asked Larry, with the same unflinching directness, while several men who had seen him enter the works came crowding round the window to look in with anxious faces, as if they hung on every word.

Kelly saw them, too, and the lordly look faded

slowly away, for he knew that an angry word on his part might occasion a scene of excitement he would not willingly undergo.

He had taken advantage of the fact that Larry Locke had been reported dangerously hurt, and of his absence in court, to send out word to his old employees that he was "ready to take them all back at the old scale, and give them half a day's extra pay if they would only come and start his furnaces at once."

He sent out this word knowing well the straits to which the striking workmen were reduced, and hoping that they would rely on his word in the absence of their leader.

The bait had taken, by dint of solemn assurances, and the works were full already while the furnaces were lighted.

Kelly, as Locke had suspected, intended to play the men a trick by getting them to work on a verbal promise which he could break at any time, and here was his little scheme frustrated by the sudden arrival of the very man he had hoped was laid up for a week, at least.

With a sickly smile, as if he had done everything properly, he said:

"Why, the old scale, of course. I've left the Ironmasters' Union, and, as far as this mill is concerned, the strike is over. Surely, you can't blame me for getting to work at once, can you? I do hope, Mr. Locke, that you are not going to give us any further trouble. You say you are fighting for the men. Well, you have won the fight, and they have got the scale they asked for. If you make any further trouble, it seems to me you are not standing their friend."

The appeal was an artful one, and made not so much to Larry, as to the men outside the window, who were listening closely.

Locke saw the trap the other had laid; but he had been too well trained in the tenets of his Order to be entrapped.

"That is all very well; he said quietly, "but that is not the question now. This strike was made by the Knights of Labor, and you have refused to treat with them. Now you are pretending to declare the strike off, without recognizing them. Have you made a written agreement with any one, to take the men on at the old scale: and if so, for how long? That is the question."

Kelly bit his lip. He did not dare to lie; for he saw the men at the window, so he said, with a sickly smile:

"Why, no, I have made no written agreement with any one. My word is well known in the trade, as being as good as any other man's bond."

"Then with whom have you made a verbal agreement?" asked Larry, in the same stern, cold tone, very unlike that of a man who deems work a favor, to be accepted with thanks.

"Well, with each of the men individually, as they came in," said the iron-master, a little uneasily. "Now, Mr. Locke, don't go to making any more trouble, and putting these poor men out of a job. They are all quite satisfied, and you have no right to interfere with them. Isn't that so, boys?"

In his eagerness to get rid of Locke, he rashly appealed to the men at the window; but the response he elicited was far from being favorable, for one of them said dryly:

"We're willing to stand by what Mr. Locke says. Let him go ahead. We are all listening to you and him."

Larry heaved a sigh of relief; for he had begun to think, from the looks of things, that the manufacturer had induced the men to leave the strike and desert their comrades.

He saw that they were with him yet; but doubtful as to the result of his negotiation. So he took a seat, unbidden, opposite the lordly ironmaster, on purpose to show them that he was able to maintain his position, and said slowly:

"Mr. Kelly, this strike is not over, till you have signed a written agreement with the Knights of Labor, that you will allow all men in your employment the old scale, and that Knights shall not be discharged, on account of anything done during this strike, so far. If you refuse this, the men will know that you do not intend to keep that word which you say is so good. Now, sir, are you willing to sign such an agreement, or shall the strike go on again. Yes or no?"

As he spoke, he rose from his seat, and stood by the window, with one hand raised, as if to give the fatal signal, which Kelly had already learned to dread.

For a moment the manufacturer glanced at the workmen outside, but the look on their faces showed that they felt proud of the stand Larry had taken in their interests, and with a sigh he said:

"I'm willing to do it, of course. Haven't I promised the men a half day's pay extra, if they came to work? Don't be too hard, Locke."

Larry curled his lip slightly.

"Hard indeed. Come, Mr. Kelly, it has been a fair fight, and you have got to give in. Don't whine over it. Are you ready to sign the agreement or not?"

Kelly ground his teeth in impotent rage at

the dictatorial tone of the man he knew to be only a workman, but said sullenly:

"Yes, I am. I'll write it out at once."

Larry shook his head.

"That will not be necessary. I have a printed form for just such cases, and we will fill it up and each take a copy."

Kelly winced, but had to yield.

"All right," he said. "You're a hard man, but I'll do as you say."

"And when it's signed, it has to be read to all the men, so that there can be no backing out," said Larry firmly. "You had no business to call the strike at an end without a regular paper, and you will have to pay for it."

Kelly made a grimace.

"Confound it, man, you are as hard as iron. We heard you were half dead, and here you are, as lively as ever."

Larry smiled slightly, as he drew from his pocket the blank agreement to which he had referred, and sat down at a desk by the rich manufacturer, to fill out the proper conditions.

The men at the window never stirred from their places as the scratching of the pens went on, and watched both, till they had seen the agreement signed.

Then Larry beckoned to two of them to come in and witness the signatures, after which he folded up his copy, and put it in his pocket, with the quiet observation:

"Now, Mr. Kelly, as the Master Workman of this district, I declare this strike over. Good-morning, sir."

Then the men at the window raised a cheer as he walked out, while Kelly scowled after him, but made no remark.

Out in the yard, Larry stopped to say to the men present:

"Boys, the strike is over at last, and you have got what you wanted. You came near losing it, through taking your own way, and forgetting that you must stick together, if you hope to beat capital. To-morrow, the other mills will open, or I am very much mistaken. The Knights of Labor have beaten the Bosses' Union."

And with that he walked out of the mill into the street, where the first person he saw was Marcellus Skinner, driving slowly by the works which he was eying malevolently, as he noted the smoke coming from the furnaces.

Larry, who was thinking only of the interests of his comrades, and had lost all sense of his own private injuries, nodded to the ironmaster as he passed him, and observed:

"If you don't give in to-night, Mr. Skinner, you will be the only man in Holesburg whose fire is out, to-morrow morning."

Skinner scowled bitterly as he replied:

"They can give in for all me; but I'm a rock; and you'll find that out yet, Mr. Larry. I don't give in, and I don't sell the works, neither. And you'll find out that all the tramps you can bring can't swear me into prison for killing such cattle as you."

And with that he whipped his horse and drove on, leaving Larry with the sense that his own fight was not over yet.

CHAPTER XL.

CONCLUSION.

BUT even Marcellus Skinner, obstinate as he was, could not stem the tide which had begun to set against him.

The very next morning, as Larry had predicted to him, the strike was over in Holesburg, as far as the other manufacturers were concerned. The starting up of the big mill of Kelly & Barr had broken the back of the Ironmasters' Union, and one by one, the other men signed the agreement to take back all their old hands, at the scale which had prevailed before Skinner undertook to cut them down. The sullen Skinner, on the day after this occurred, found himself the only man in town whose fire was out, while his old friends of the Union, as they passed him in the street, avoided his eye, or openly sneered at him for standing out, when the rest gave in. The strike had thrown a number of contracts back, and work had never been so plentiful in Holesburg, while Skinner had the satisfaction of seeing that many of the men whom he had discharged from his own mills, had gone into others which had been compelled to take on extra hands.

Of course he was aware that this rush could only be temporary, and that before long, many of these men would be out of work; but all the same, the spectacle of other men making money, while he was idle, was a galling one to him, and he began to wax uneasy, on the second week after the strike ended.

He had seen and heard nothing of his prosecution for conspiracy against Locke and his nephew, and began to think that it had blown over, though he had not dared to go near the jail to communicate with his partner in iniquity, Mr. James Somers. He had thrown that interesting person over, at the instigation of Mr. Van Slack, who had counseled him that the best thing he could do was to plead ignorance of the matter, and try to break down Snoopey, if the matter ever came before the Grand Jury, which the lawyer thought was doubtful. Larry Locke's matter, about the mortgage, was still hanging over the head of the workman and Van

Slack advised his client that it might be the means of inducing Larry to abandon the prosecution, though the bribe had been insufficient to make him abandon his companions in the strike.

But a change came over the spirit of Mr. Skinner's dreams, in the second week, when the Grand Jury met in the Court House.

One day, his son, Tom, came running into his house with a pale face, to tell him that "Van Slack wanted to see him instantly." The old man, surprised at the summons, and in a bad temper as it was, rapped out savagely to the trembling Tom:

"Come to him? What does the fellow mean? He's my lawyer and I pay him for his work. Let him come to me, curse his impudence!"

Tom wrung his hands.

"He says he don't care whether you come or not: that you are in a bad hole and that Scriven has stolen a march on him. Oh father, father, I saw them myself, going into the district attorney's office, and Van Slack is all broke up."

"Saw who going? What does the boy mean?" asked the old man still more angrily. "Are all you people gone crazy, together?"

"No, it ain't that," cried Tom, who seemed to be quite overcome at the news he was bringing.

"But Scriven is there and he's got Terror Jim Somers, and Snoopey, and all the fellers that we rigged out that day, to lay out Larry Locke. You'd best go see Van Slack, before it is too late, father."

And this time the news had a visible effect on the hardened Skinner, for he turned gray, and Tom saw the sweat start out on his forehead, though all he said was:

"Oh, it can't be. He would have told me before!"

But he got out of his chair and walked rapidly round to the office of Van Slack, whom he found in the midst of his papers, with an air of great disquietude about him. When Skinner came in the lawyer said not a word till he had locked the door, when he came to his client, and said in a low voice:

"Scriven has stolen a march on us. He has got all those men who laid for Locke, and the Grand Jury are examining them now. If you can't make a compromise it's all up with you, I'm afraid."

Skinner broke out into a vicious oath, crying:

"What do I pay you for, if it is not to take care of my interests? You should have stopped this."

Van Slack drew himself up at once, to reply in a very dignified manner, for he felt all the difference between himself and his client:

"Mr. Skinner, I am a respectable practitioner and cannot be expected to protect any one in breaking the law. If you had told me that you wished this thing hushed up because there was something in it that you dared not have revealed, I should have gone to Scriven long ago, and we could have arranged it. As it is, it has gone too far, now that the Grand Jury have got hold of it, and I don't know what you can do, unless you stand your trial. If they once indict you, you will have to give heavy bail, and I fear, from what I hear, that Somers has turned State's evidence."

He had hardly got through speaking when there came a smart rap at the door, and the bright buttons of a policeman were seen there, at the sight of which even Skinner wilted as he asked:

"What's the matter? What do you want here, officer?"

The policeman, whom he knew well by sight, came in closer, and in a voice that showed he was performing a very disagreeable duty, said:

"Sorry to have to do it, sir, but I've got a warrant for you."

"On what charge?" asked Van Slack. "I'm the gentleman's counsel, and he's on bail now."

"This is a different thing," was the reply. "It's an indictment now, and I'll have to take the gentleman along to the jail at once."

And thither Skinner had to go, though he got the policeman to send for a carriage to take him there, and once there he was lodged in a cell, the same as any other man, while he saw nothing of Van Slack till the evening, when he came to tell him that he had obtained a writ of *habeas corpus*, and that he had found a judge who would admit him to bail on the indictment at a heavy sum.

"I've been to Scriven's," he added, when he was sure they were alone, "and he says that young Van Beaver is not disposed to be harsh, if you will come down; but that if you want to fight they will give you the full benefit of the law. And what's more, I have seen a copy of the testimony given before the Grand Jury."

He said this with so much meaning that Skinner asked in a faltering voice, that showed he was beginning to weaken at last:

"And what was it, Van Slack? Has any one peached on me?"

The lawyer nodded gloomily.

"Somers has made a clean breast of it, and all the rest have sworn to instructions given by you, and money paid by you, for the purpose of having Larry Locke and your nephew, Paul Van Beaver, waylaid at night and killed, during the tumults of the strike. I am bound to

confess, as your lawyer, that the case is infernally strong, and that I don't see how you are going to get over it, save in one way, and then it will be a matter of favor."

By the time he had finished Skinner was sweating at every pore, and his voice was low and husky, as he asked:

"And what is that?"

"Scriven says that both sides are ready to abandon the prosecution, if you will give Locke a release of his mortgage and agree to sell the mills to your nephew, who wants to carry them on himself."

Skinner started violently, and his face darkened, as he said:

"Give up, beat, and to him! I'll stand my trial first!"

"All right," was the reply. "In that case, I'll do the best I can for you, of course; but I warn you that I shall have to ask a heavy retainer. You see, this sort of thing is out of my regular line, and we always ask extra pay for that work. Criminal practice is very troublesome, and we have to get our pay in advance."

Skinner said no more, but walked sullenly by his counsel, with a policeman behind him, to the house of the judge who had agreed to hear the case and admit him to bail. He was thinking deeply all the way there, and trying to make up his mind to fight, while his fears were telling him that fight was useless.

When he got to the house he was shown into the judge's parlor, and found his old friend Roberts there; but the face of his former intimate was cold and stern, and he showed no disposition to exhibit to the fallen man any of the favors he had shown so freely when he was rich and powerful, and before the strike had ended in the victory for the workmen.

Scriven and Paul Van Beaver were there; and the preliminaries of admission to bail were terminated by the announcement, on the part of the judge, that he would take bail for ten thousand dollars, and would require householders for that amount.

Skinner had to remain in the custody of the policeman while Van Slack hunted round for bail, and at last the lawyer came back, with a gloomy face, to announce that, of all Skinner's friends not one would become his bondsman under the grave charge which hung over him. As long as they had imagined it false, they had been ready; but when they heard of the evidence that had been given, and the fact that all the witnesses were in prison, where they could not be tampered with, they declined, with one accord, to go bail for a man who would be sure to escape if he could.

So Skinner had to be sent back to jail, with the comfortable idea that he would have to stay there, till the day of his trial, and that Van Slack would require a retainer of a thousand dollars, at least, with counsel fees and allowances of several thousand more, before the trial closed; while there was no prospect of an acquittal, unless the witnesses could be spirited away from Holesburg, of which there was no hope, Mr. Scriven having taken his measures well.

The style of living in a jail is of that nature that, while some people like it, having never seen anything as good, most people, who have not led the life of a tramp, find it miserable in the extreme.

So, while Terror Jim and his friends were enjoying the unusual comforts of a roof over their heads and plentiful meals, Skinner was worrying all the time over the confinement and the coarse food supplied by the sheriff to his many boarders, while the news that court would open in two weeks, and that his case was one of the first on the calendar, did not tend to restore his tranquillity.

As the time drew nigh when he was to be tried, and he realized that he had not a friend in the world, not even his son, who had deserted him in his trials, the spirit of the old man began to waver.

At last he made up his mind to send for Van Slack, but the lawyer sent back word that "he must decline to see Mr. Skinner without the retainer for which he had stipulated."

Then, with a deep sigh, the avaricious manufacturer wrote out a check, and sent it by one of the sheriff's deputies, who soon returned, ushering in Van Slack, as mild and obsequious as ever.

"Van," said the broken man, as soon as he was in the cell, "tell me, as a lawyer, what are my chances in this trial?"

Van Slack rubbed his hands and looked at the ceiling.

"I'll do all I can for you, of course, Mr. Skinner, and you can get the best talent in the State by paying for it."

"I know that," was the crusty answer, "but that ain't what I want to know. Shall I get off? If you say I can, for sure, I'll pay for it. But you must give me your word as a lawyer that I can."

Thus urged, Van Slack said slowly:

"You are asking an impossibility, Mr. Skinner. No lawyer could give such an assurance."

Skinner heaved a deep sigh.

"That's all I wanted to know. I can't get off

sure. Then I'll do the best I can. You can go. You've got the last of my money."

And not another word would he say till Van Slack had left the cell, when he sent for the deputy who had carried his messages, and told him to go to Mr. Scriven's office and send him to the jail to see Mr. Skinner.

The deputy went and returned in half an hour with the old lawyer, who came into the cell, looking cold and stiff, and said:

"You sent for me, Mr. Skinner. I confess I am at a loss to account for the message, but I have come to see you."

"Yes," said old Skinner, with a voice that shook somewhat. "I sent for you, Scriven, because you always treated me honest, though you went against me. What will you take to drop this prosecution?"

"Not a cent!" was the emphatic reply. "It has gone out of my hands into those of the State. If you choose to send a proposition to the two men who are the prosecutors behind the district attorney, they may induce him to withdraw the case from the calendar for this term; but that is the best they or any one can do, and the bail will have to remain where it is."

Old Skinner, looking strangely gray and old, said slowly:

"I guess I've deserved that. But I'm willing to do the square thing now. See here. If I give up the mill to Paul, and take an annuity from him at a fair valuation of my interest, will he let up on me or not?"

"Mr. Van Beaver is not in this prosecution," was the cold reply. "It is Larry Locke. Paul wants nothing from you. He knows well enough that your trial will end in your committal to State's Prison for a long period, and the courts will appoint him, as next heir, to the probable custody of the mill property during your life. If you had treated the next heir decently, it would be different."

"Well, then, I'll give up the mortgage on that Locke's house, and all I ask is that he let up on me," pleaded the fallen man. "Scriven, you don't want to trample me in the mud, just because I'm a rich man. It won't do you any good to have me stand in the dock, will it?"

Scriven shrugged his shoulders.

"You should have thought of all this, while you were rich and in the enjoyment of your liberty. Money will do you no good, now that there are a dozen witnesses against you."

"Then you mean to say that I shall have to stand my trial?" asked Skinner, with the veins standing out on his forehead, while he clinched his hand fiercely.

"I'll go and see on what terms the district attorney will let you go, and let you know. That is the best I can do for you."

And with that the lawyer left the cell, while Skinner passed the next hour pacing up and down, in more agony of mind than he had ever suffered in all his life before. He was face to face with his punishment, and the more he thought of it the less he liked it.

If, by a miracle, he had suddenly been released from prison and put into the same position he had occupied a few weeks before, he would doubtless have acted in the same way he had done; but being in prison, and with punishment coming on him, he made all sorts of good resolves, as other scamps have done in their day.

When at last steps in the corridor showed that some one was coming, he uttered a fervent "Thank God," for the first time in years, and eagerly waited for his visitors.

The only person who came was Scriven, with an agreement which he gave him, saying:

"You can look over that at your leisure. If you choose to sign, the judge and district attorney have agreed to let the case go for the term; and your nephew has agreed to go your bail. If you don't wish to sign it, you can stand your trial. I shall be here at ten in the morning. Good-afternoon."

And he went away, leaving Skinner staring at the paper in his hand.

Well he might stare, for that paper made him not only a beggar, but a pensioner on the bounty of the nephew he had treated in his day like a slave. The agreement for him to sign was one giving up all his interest in the property inherited by him under his father's will, and promising to leave the United States and live in Europe, while Paul Van Beaver, on his part, agreed to pay to him, out of the proceeds of the business, as they should accrue, the sum of three thousand dollars a year, during his natural life.

The terms were hard and stern; but they were the best he deserved, and he knew it.

When Scriven came next morning, with a second copy of the agreement in his pocket, he found that the crushed criminal had already signed his copy, and a little later he left the jail with Scriven, and went before Judge Roberts, where Paul Van Beaver, as the new owner of the mills, gave bail for his uncle, in the sum of ten thousand dollars, to produce him at his trial or pay the money.

Then they took him to the house that had lately been his, where Larry Locke's mortgage was duly satisfied, and the young workman at

last held in his hand the deed of a free and unincumbered property.

The rest of our story will not take long to tell. Skinner and his graceless son took their departure for Europe, where they passed the next few years in a cheap place in the south of France, only making themselves known to Paul at intervals, in a series of begging letters, when they had outrun their income and gone into debt.

In the mean time Paul Van Beaver assumed the charge of the mills, and ended his part of the strike at once, while Larry Locke was made manager of the works, and gave universal satisfaction. The business prospered, and in the course of years Paul, finding his profits increasing, voluntarily raised the wages of his hands, and had the satisfaction of making the other manufacturers do the same, much against their will. The Knights of Labor in the town continued to prosper, and with their prosperity, the condition of the workmen steadily rose.

Larry was often pressed by his old friend Paul, as the years went on, to take a share in the profits of the mill, but he steadily refused.

"No, Mr. Paul," he once said, "a workman I am, and always shall be. The Knights of Labor made me what I am, and if I was to go back on them now, and join the bosses, I know I couldn't stand the pressure that would be brought to bear on me, to make me think capital and labor were enemies. In our Order we believe they ought to be friends, and the time may come when the workmen of America will know as much as the bosses, and be able to take care of themselves. But just at present they don't, and their enemies are ready to take advantage of the least mistake they make, whenever they see a chance. Till there are no more bosses and slaves, and till the time when work won't be looked on as a favor to be asked, I'm going to stick to the Knights. I'd rather be Master Workman than own a mill, any time. When the time comes that every honest workman in America belongs to the Order, and all stick together, as we should do, every workingman shall see more happiness, than he ever saw before. Heaven send the time, and God speed the just aims of the KNIGHTS OF LABOR!"

THE END.

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